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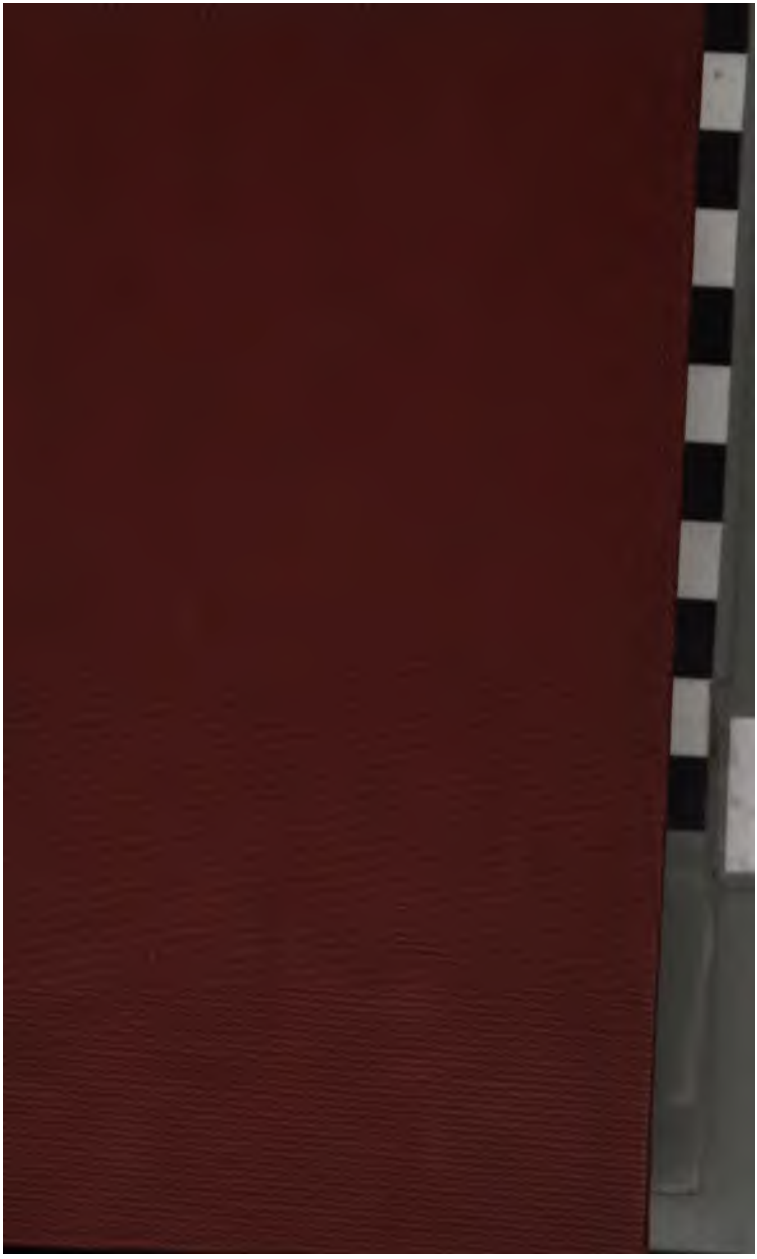

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THE

CHRISTIAN PROFESSOR

ADDRESSED,

IN A SERIES OF

COUNSELS AND CAUTIONS

TO THE MEMBERS

OF

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

BY JOHN ANGELL JAMES.

SECOND EDITION.

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PREFACE.

The substance of most of the chapters of this volume, was delivered in a course of sermons addressed to the church of which the Holy Ghost hath made me overseer. The seasons chosen for delivering them were those Sabbath mornings on which the Lord's Supper was administered; and this time was selected, because it may be supposed, that if ever the minds of Professing Christians are more than usually softened to receive the impression of practical truth, it is when the eucharistic emblems of which they are about to partake, stand uncovered before them, and as they silently point to the cross, say in the ear of faith, "*Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*"

When I look into the New Testament, and read what a Christian *should be*, and then look into the church of God, and see what Cristians *are*, I am painfully affected by observing the dissimilarity; and in my jealousy for the honour of the Christian Profession, have made this effort, perhaps a feeble one, certainly an anxious one, to remove its blemishes, to restore its impaired beauty, and thus raise its reputation.

What my opinion of the prevailing state of religion in the present day is, will appear still more clearly in the following pages, and especially in the chapter devoted to the consideration of this subject. That evangelical piety is advancing and spreading over a wider surface, I have not a doubt: but what it is gaining in breadth, it is losing, I am afraid, in depth. Politics, and their sad accompaniments, party strife and animosity; trade carried on as it has been, with such rage of competition, and upon such a basis of credit, and to such an extent of speculation; together with that worldly spirit to which an age of growing refinement and luxury

usually gives rise, are exceedingly adverse to a religion, of which the elements are *faith, hope, love.* The church of Christ, in all the sections of it, is sadly mixed up with the world as to its spirit, and many of its customs; and the great body of the faithful, are far less marked in their separation from the followers of pleasure, and the worshippers of Mammon, than they ought to be. "*Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God,*" is the description of a religion too rarely to be seen in this day. A few years ago, an attempt was made to call the attention of the churches to the subject of a revival of piety, and some efforts, not wholly ineffectual, were made to rouse the slumbering people of God, and induce them to seek for a more copious effusion of the Holy Spirit. But the call to united and fervent prayer, soon subsided amidst the busy hum of commerce, the noise of party, and the strife of tongues. Still, however, I believe, notwithstanding, that the cause of the Lord is advancing upon the earth, and that the work of grace is begun in many persons, whose lot and whose grief it is, to be far more occupied with things seen and temporal than accords with their happiness.

Some of the great masters of painting have manifested their skill in taking portraits of themselves. Conceive of one of those noble pictures, fresh from the artist's pencil, presenting in the magic of drawing and colouring, an almost speaking representation of the great original. By some neglect, however, it is thrown aside, and in its unworthy banishment, amidst the lumber of an attic, soon becomes covered with dust and dirt, till its beauty is disfigured, and its transcendent excellence is disguised. Still, in despite of these defilements, there is the likeness and the workmanship of the immortal author, which, by a careful removal of the accidental adhesions again shine forth upon enraptured spectators, as a glorious display of human genius. Is it a profane or unworthy simile, to say that a Christian in his present state of imperfection, is something like this? He is the image of God, as delineated by God himself, but O, how covered with the dust and impurities of his earthly condition; still, how-

ever, beneath that blemished exterior, there is the likeness and workmanship of the Great God, and which, when purified from every speck and disfigurement, He will present in its restored state to the admiring gaze of the universe.

I am anxious that as much as possible of the imperfections of the Christian character, should *now* be displaced in our earthly sojourn, and as much as may be, of its great excellence should *now* be seen. For if we profess as Christians, to have the mind of Christ, and to bear the image of God, how tremblingly anxious, how prayerfully cautious, should we be, not by retaining any thing in our conduct, which is opposite to the Divine nature, to circulate a slander against God himself.

There is an ineffable beauty in the Christian character, as delineated by our Lord Jesus Christ in his personal ministry, and by his holy apostles, and there wants nothing but the tolerably fair copy of this in the conduct of all who bear the Christian name, to silence, if not convince, the spirit of infidelity. If the Christian church were composed only of persons whose characters were truly formed upon the model of the Sermon upon the Mount, or the Apostle's description of charity, there would be no need of such defences of Christianity as those of LARDNER, BUTLER, PALEY, and CHALMERS: men would *see* that Christianity came from heaven, because there was nothing like it upon earth. The gospel *is* its own witness, but then its testimony is so often contradicted by its professed believers, so far as their conduct goes, that it is got rid of on the alleged unbelief of its friends, for it is said, if they believed it in reality, they would act in greater conformity to its requirements. When the Church of Christ, shall by its spirit and conduct, bear the same testimony for the gospel, as the gospel does for itself, then in the mouth of these two witnesses, shall the truth of Christianity be established, beyond, I will not say the power of refutation, for that it is already, but beyond the possibility of objection.

It is I think, extremely probable, that great injury is done to the Christian character and profession, by an abuse of the

commonly admitted fact, that there is no perfection upon earth. By the aid of this humiliating concession, it is to be feared that many reconcile themselves to far more and greater imperfections, than are in any case compatible with consistency, and in some with sincerity. There *is* no perfection. But is there no command to us to seek after it? Is it not our duty to obtain it? The man who does not make it the object of his desire and pursuit; who does not wish and endeavour to obtain every kind of holy excellence, and in every possible degree, has reason to doubt the reality of his religion. *A professing Christian ought to be a character of universal loveliness*, in which no degree, not even the smallest, of any kind of known imperfection, should be allowed to remain. It should be with him as to holy character, as it is with persons of much neatness and nicety as to their dress, who are not only rendered uncomfortable by great defilements, but who are uneasy till every discernible speck of dust is removed, and the whole garment presents an unsullied surface. There is such a thing as *moral neatness*, which, in addition to freedom from and abhorrence of greater sins, adds a sensitiveness to lesser ones, and a studious effort after universal purity. Perfection is our duty; perfection should be our wish, and perfection our aim; by which I mean to say, that a Christian is not to allow himself to practice any degree of any sin; and is to seek every possible degree of every holy virtue. How different an aspect would the Christian Profession present, if all who made it were to make perfection of character their aim, and according to apostolic exhortation, were to "*perfect holiness in the fear of God*," and to stand forth before the world, "*blameless and harmless, the unrebukable sons of God.*"

It was not my intention in this work, to enter into the consideration of private, experimental, or doctrinal religion, so much as into its practical parts; and to contemplate the believer rather as a professor, than a Christian, or at least, rather as a Christian in relation to the church and to the world, than in his individual capacity, or in his retirements.

To have followed precisely in the same track as Mr. JAY, in his lovely work, "THE CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATED," would have been worse than unnecessary.

I design this little volume as a sequel to "The Church Member's Guide," and as an amplification of some topics touched upon incidentally in that work. It has been the fate of that book, to obtain for its author a notoriety which he certainly did not contemplate in composing it. Advantage has been taken, by one of the tricks of controversy, of the admissions of abuses to which, like every thing else that is good, the principles of nonconformity have been subjected in the practices of some of the churches, to turn these candid exposures, against the whole system of voluntary churches. This is a disingenuous artifice, a miserable sophism, a dangerous weapon, since no system in this world of imperfection can stand before it; no, not even that set up by Apostles themselves; for the same kind of evils which I have acknowledged are to be found amongst *us*, are to be traced in all the primitive churches planted and superintended by inspired men.* Perhaps the same means will be employed in refer-

* Mr. Hall, in replying to one of his opponents in the controversy on "The Terms of Communion," complains indignantly of the same species of disingenuous warfare. Speaking of some quotations that had been made from his own writings, he says—"It is obvious that he who wishes to judge of them fairly, must view them in their proper place, accompanied with their respective proofs and illustrations; and that to tear them from their connection, and exhibit them in their naked form, as though they had been expressed in the author's own terms, is a direct appeal to prejudice. The obvious design is to deter the reader at the outset, and to dispose him to prejudge the cause before it is heard. To mingle in the course of controversy insinuations and inuendos which have no other tendency than to impair the impartiality of the reader, is too common an artifice; but such an open, barefaced appeal to prejudice, is of rare occurrence. (Not rare now.) It is an expedient to which no man will condescend, who is conscious of possessing superior resources. To this part of the performance, no reply will be expected, for though the author feels himself fully equal to the task of answering his opponent, he confesses himself quite at a loss to answer himself. Like a certain animal in the Eastern part of the world, who is reported to be extremely fond of climbing a tree for that purpose, he merely pelts the author with his own produce."—HALL's Works, vol. ii. page 229.

ence to this volume. If so, those who use them are quite welcome to them. To guard, however, as much as possible against misconception, or misrepresentation, I would affirm, once for all, that I think professors of *all* denominations are much below their privileges, their principles, and their obligations; and that I have not addressed the contents of these chapters to my own flock, because I think they are behind others in piety, but because I wish them to be above and beyond the average religion of the day.

It will be expected, perhaps, that I ought to take some public notice of a volume of letters addressed to me by Mr. BEVERLEY. I do not know that the circumstance of my name being placed in the title page of that book, lays me under any obligation to notice its contents at all, much less to reply to them. I can have no hesitation, however, in briefly adverting to that singular production. My own opinion of it, and of the author's other works, accords in some measure with those which have been already expressed from other quarters. It is a book which can please none, and yet may improve all, if indeed they are in a mood to receive and profit by what is administered in no very gentle manner. It may be called, to use an artist's phrase, *a study* in church polity, in which among some things to commend, there are more to condemn. There are some truths, but many fallacies. As a writer, Mr. BEVERLEY is more of a caricaturist than a portrait painter; and a satirist, rather than a censor. His great fault lies in speaking too dogmatically upon subjects, with which he can be from his situation but imperfectly acquainted, and in drawing general conclusions from too narrow a range of facts. I trust we shall never adopt his views on the subject of a learned ministry; and on the other hand, never be induced to put learning in the place of piety, as the only or first qualification for the sacred office. Our ordination services admit, perhaps, of improvement, but cannot be dispensed with, intended as they are, to introduce a *minister* to pastoral functions, but not to consecrate a *priest* for sacerdotal offices.

It is difficult to believe that Mr. BEVERLEY wishes to be the founder of a new sect; I would rather charitably hope that his desire is to bring back those which already exist, to what he conceives to be the primitive simplicity of apostolic Christianity. Yet, why has he placed himself in the situation of a voluntary outlaw from the Christian church? More of a destructive than a reformer, he is skilful in demolition, but is prepared with no scheme for reconstructing the ruin he has occasioned. He is capable of doing something better than he has yet achieved. He *can* write with effect, and *will* write with good effect, when he will allow pious earnestness, and courteous fidelity, to gain the ascendant in his composition, over caustic severity, and an exaggerated representation of the faults both of systems and their supporters. Passages of considerable beauty might be selected from all his productions, but there has been in most of them a want of seriousness, which makes them more adapted to please the scoffer, than to improve the believer.

Still, however, I wish his last work, nominally addressed to myself, to be widely circulated and attentively read. Even his sarcasms may do good; and his fierce, and almost lawless severity may be turned to account. He has told us some faults of which we *are* guilty, though not perhaps in the degree he has represented; and he has accused us of others, from which, I think, we are clear; the former let us amend, the latter avoid. His gravest accusation is, that we have too little spiritual piety and brotherly love. Whether he be thought the fittest man to tell us so, or whether he has told us of it in the best manner, let us not stay to ask, but bow to the rebuke, which, in common with all other denominations, and perhaps not *more* than *they*, we deserve, and endeavour by God's grace to improve. I hesitate not to express my conviction that he wishes to do us good, though it may be doubted whether he has chosen the best method of demonstrating his respect, or promoting our edification.

J. A. J.

EDGBASTON, April 21, 1837.

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CHAPTER I.

WHAT THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION IMPORTS.

A PROFESSION of Christianity is the most solemn engagement on earth, and he that makes it, is either one of the best or one of the worst members of society. Much then does it become all who call themselves by the name of Christ, to inquire with the deepest anxiety, whether they are sufficiently aware of the nature and obligations of the act which they performed, when. by entering into fellowship with the church of God, they publicly said, "I am a Christian." Being apprehensive that there is much ignorance on this subject, and much neglect even where there is not ignorance, I most earnestly entreat the serious and prayerful attention of all professors who may read these pages to what may now be stated, as to a matter personally and individually applicable to them.

To "profess" means "to declare publicly and solemnly something that we believe, or that we intend to do;" so that a "profession" of Christianity signifies, *a public, solemn and emphatic declaration that we believe the truths and submit to the obligations of Christianity.* The translators of the Scriptures have given in our English version, two renderings of the same original word, sometimes construing it *pro*fession, and sometimes *con*fession. In this they have conformed to a difference which modern use has established, and by which *pro*fession means,

the declaration of our religious faith in the ordinary and tranquil circumstances of the Christian Church without any reference to persecution; while *con*fession means the avowal of our belief, in times of danger, and before persecuting rulers. A *con*fessor is synonymous with a martyr: while a *pro*fessor means simply a person publicly declaring himself a Christian. Still, however, it must be admitted that as there is no difference in the original Scriptures, so there is none in reality; for he who makes a *pro*fession of religion declares, if he be sincere, his intention to seal his testimony, if required to do so, with his blood.

It may not be amiss to present the reader with some of those passages of holy writ in which the two words are employed. Speaking to Timothy, the apostle Paul tells him that he had "professed a good profession before many witnesses."—1 Tim. vi. 12. This refers to the declaration of his faith before the Church: while in the next verse he is said to have witnessed or testified a good *con*fession before Pontius Pilate. Jesus Christ is called "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession."—Heb. iii. 1.; and in Heb. iv. 14, it is said, "Seeing we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." The passages in which the other term is used are still more numerous; only a few of which need be given. "Whosoever," said Christ, "shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."—Matthew, x. 32. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."—Rom. x.

10, 11.—"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." —1 John, iv. 15.

Let us now consider,

FIRST.—What the Christian profession includes: It is a public, solemn, and emphatic declaration to this effect, "*I am a Christian;* I wish to be considered one; *and I mean to live as one.*" Or, to use the comprehensive language of Christ, it is *confessing* HIM *before men.* It is important to remark, that whatever be its import, it has special and explicit reference to Christ; it is not a declaration of belief merely in the existence, attributes, and purposes of God, as the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe; an avowal of Theism, as opposed to idolatry; no, it is a profession of CHRIST: whosoever, said our Lord, shall confess ME, I will confess *him*: whosoever, repeats the Apostle, "shall confess that *he* is raised from the dead shall be saved; to *him* every tongue shall confess." This is both instructive and impressive, and contains a strong presumptive proof of his true and proper divinity. The Christian church is a collection of witnesses for Christ; a public embodied testimony to Christ: a spiritual temple, bearing on its lofty front the inscription "TO THE GLORY OF CHRIST." Every thing under the New Covenant refers to HIM; the Sabbath is to honour HIM, it is the Lord's day; the Eucharist is to commemorate HIM; the Christian profession is to testify of HIM: so that if Christ be not divine, we are under a dispensation which seems to shut God out. Religious worship and obligations are diverted from God, and directed to a creature. There was nothing like this under the Old Covenant. Moses was but a servant of the house under that economy, and is not held up as receiving the honour

of a proprietor; but Christ is a Son over his own house; and this is our profession, that *we* are CHRIST'S.

But what is it concerning Christ that we declare when we make a profession of him?

We profess to believe in him and receive him as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, divinely appointed by the Father as the Word who was in the beginning with God and was God, to be the great *Prophet* by whom is made known to man the nature of Jehovah and his purpose of redeeming mercy towards our fallen race; and that with docility and meekness we receive all his doctrines, whether declared by his own personal ministry on earth, or by his inspired apostles, however mysterious their nature, or humbling their tendency.

We profess that we are convinced of sin as transgressors of the law of God, that we repent of our manifold and aggravated transgressions, that God will be just in our destruction, and that hating and forsaking iniquities, we mean to live a righteous and holy life.

We profess that as sinners lost and condemned, not only by the fall of Adam, but by our own actual transgressions, we truly believe in him and thankfully receive him as the divinely appointed *Priest* and sacrifice for sin, and that we rest exclusively upon the infinite merit of his obedience unto death for the justification of our persons, together with all the blessings of grace here, and glory hereafter; and that through faith in him we have received a present and do really hope for an eternal salvation.

We profess that we cordially receive Christ and cheerfully submit to him as our *King*, *Lawgiver*, and *Judge*, who has promulgated his Laws in the New Testament, and who requires an unhesitating, unreserved, willing, affectionate and uninterrupted

submission to his authority, however self-denying that submission may sometimes be as regards our ease, wealth and worldly esteem. We acknowledge his right to rule over the body, with all its senses, organs, members, and appetites; and the soul, with all its varied and noble faculties. We declare that the rigid, refined, severe morality of the sermon on the Mount, and the law of charity laid down in the epistle to the Corinthians, are and shall be the rule of our conduct; and that as Christ has enjoined it, we will, by God's help, follow whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. And also since he has instituted various ordinances of religion for his own glory, and our benefit, such as the Sabbath, the sacraments and other public services, we will punctually, and seriously, and constantly observe them.

We profess that we receive Christ as our *pattern* and *example*, and that we are determined, as God shall assist us, to conform ourselves to him in our spirit, temper, and conduct; that we will strive to come, as near as our circumstances will allow, to *Him*, who was so dead to this world, that he renounced wealth, rank, ease, fame—so holy that he could appeal to the most malignant of his foes for the sinless purity of his conduct—so submissive to the divine will, that he drank the deepest, fullest, bitterest cup of human wo, without a murmur—so meek and lowly, as to bear the greatest injuries and insults with unruffled serenity and placability—so full of benevolence, as to pray for his foes, to die for them, and save them. Yes, we say to the world, "Look at Jesus of Nazareth in his holy and beneficent career, or in his ignominious and agonizing death; see him whose whole character was a compound of purity and *love*—and there is our model."

We profess to receive his cause and kingdom in the world, as ours; to identify ourselves with true religion, and to unite our hearts with the church as the most important community on earth; we avow that whatever relative and temporal importance may attach to the cause of literature, science, liberty, commerce, yet the salvation of immortal souls is the most momentous interest in the universe, and that our time, influence, talents and property, are at Christ's command, to promote this object.

We profess that we have received Christ as the scope and end of our very existence; that we have ceased to live for wealth, ease, or reputation, as the supreme object of pursuit; that for us *to live is Christ;* and that so as he is honoured by us it is of secondary consequence in what situation or circumstances he may place us for this purpose.

We profess to be looking for Christ's universal spiritual reign and second coming to manifest himself to his church and to judge the world, as the supreme object of our joyful hope; and compared with which, all the greatest changes and most glorious revolutions that are expected on earth, are but as insignificant and uninteresting events.

We profess that we hope to be accepted by Christ in the day of judgment; expect to be received into his heavenly kingdom, where we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, and dwell for ever with the Lord; and that till then we are living by faith on earth, sending our affections after him to glory, and considering our situation in this world as that of an affectionate wife left for a season for wise reasons in a strange land, and looking forward with eager anticipation to the time of meeting with her husband to part no more; and that by the prospect *and faith of* that glory to be revealed, we have overcome *the love* of life and fear of death.

We profess that for the performance of duties so solemn, so weighty, so important, so difficult, we have no ability of our own, that all our dependence and hope are founded on the supply of the spirit of Christ Jesus: and that conscious of many defects, we are humble before God and man, and constantly need the exercise of God's forbearing and forgiving mercy.

Such is the Christian profession.

What height, what length, what depth, what breadth! Well might we ask, who dare take it up? Or who taking it up can sustain it? We now consider,

SECONDLY.—*How* his profession is made.

What I have before stated contains the *matter* of our profession, but in what *manner* is it to be made? What is the precise formal act in which it consists? To whom, and in what way, is the declaration of our faith to be delivered? If we go back to the promulgation of Christianity, we find our Lord delivering the following commission to his disciples, "Go ye and teach, (or make disciples of, as the word signifies,) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In compliance with this charge, the apostles required all who believed in Christ to be baptized, join themselves to the church, receive the Lord's Supper, and observe the other ordinances of the Christian religion: and upon a profession of their belief in Jesus, they were received into the fellowship of the faithful. This their declaration of faith, accompanied as it was by baptism, and their reception into the church, was their profession. Till they did this, however frequently they may have attended the Christian assembly, however deeply they may have been convinced of the truth of the gospel, however freely they may have communicated their sentiments

to any members of the church privately, they made no confession, and were not ranked among professors.

In the conventional use which the term has acquired among our churches, it means much the same thing, and signifies a person's declaring to the pastor and the church, with which he desires to be associated in visible communion, his repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and on the ground of that declaration, after it has been examined and found to be conformable to the mind of God, and sincerely made, so far as appears by inquiry, his being received into the church. It is his public witness to those whom God has authorized to receive the confession, his testimony to the character and work of Christ, and of the state of his own mind towards him. Publicity in the scriptural manner, is essential; there may be religion, sincere, fervent religion, but till we have publicly and formally before the pastor and church, declared ourselves believers, profession there is none. With us then profession means the act of joining ourselves with the people of God, upon an avowal of our sentiments, accompanied by a declaration, that we believe we are justified by faith and truly regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

It is professing this I say *publicly*.

Before the church; the particular church with which we enter into fellowship, and before that as the representative of the whole catholic church. We say to the church, "I take your God to be my God, your Saviour to be my Saviour, your people to be my people, your ordinances to be my ordinances. I partake with you of the common salvation, and like precious faith. I receive you as Christians, and beg in the name of our common Lord, to be received as such by you."

It is a profession *before the world*. It is saying, "Hear, ye children of men, ye that are disobeying God, and neglecting Christ, I *was* one of you, but I am *no longer* one of you: I can no longer live as you do, and as I once did. I am in Christ a new creature, old things are passed away, and all things are become new. I come out and am separate from the world, and give myself up to Christ and his church, to follow him in all things, as my Saviour, Ruler, Pattern; and I consent, and am willing you should be judges how far I fulfil my solemn obligations." And then, be it recollected, the declaration is made not only *before* the world, but *in* the world, in the shop, in the market, in the exchange. It is a profession not only for Sabbath days, but for all days; not only for the place of religious convocation, but for the places of secular resort. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates, in the city she uttereth her voice;" and her children must do the same, honouring by imitating their mother. To the man who invites or tempts them to an unkind, untrue, unjust, dishonest, malicious word or action, or who suspects them to be capable of one, they should reply, "I profess Christ, and can I deny or betray him?"

It is a profession *before angels*, who, as the ministering spirits that minister to the heirs of salvation, must be the spectators of their conduct—*before devils*, who tremble as they hear those solemn words, "I am a Christian," drop from their lips, and from that moment have all their enmity and subtlety roused and employed to make them if possible faithless to their calling—yea, it is a profession *before God*, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ bends from his throne to hear them ut-

ter the announcement, "I am a Christian," and from thenceforward ever looks from his seat of glory to see how they fulfil the obligations which they have thus publicly, solemnly, and voluntarily taken upon themselves. He never loses sight of them for a moment, but is ever watching to see how they sustain his name, his dear, and sacred and honoured name, which is above every other name, and which they have confessed before men.

What a profession, and how publicly made! By how many spectators you are surrounded and watched. From the hour you call yourself a disciple of Christ, the church with a tender interest, the world with malignant curiosity, angels with kind solicitude, devils with rooted enmity, God with a jealous eye, and Christ with tender sympathy, mark every step of your progress; for "ye are come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."

This view of the nature and obligation of the Christian profession is confirmed and forcibly stated in the following address to persons on their joining the church, taken from a Manual used in one of the Presbyterian churches in America.

EXPLANATION.

"You have now presented yourselves in this public manner before God, to take his covenant upon you—to confess Jesus Christ before men,—to testify your faith, and hope, and joy in his religion,—practically to condemn your former selves, together with the 'whole world' as 'lying in wickedness'—unre-

servedly to dedicate yourselves to the service of your Creator,—and definitely to incorporate yourselves with his visible people. You are about to profess supreme love to God, sincere contrition for all your sins of heart and life, and faith unfeigned in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are about publicly to ratify a solemn compact to receive 'the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost,' as revealed in the Scriptures, in all the agencies they execute for the government of the world, and in all the offices they sustain for the salvation of the Church; and to 'walk,' henceforth, 'in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.'

ENCOURAGEMENT.

"We trust you have fully considered the purport of these several professions and engagements. The transaction before you is solemn in its nature, and will be followed with eternal consequences. God and holy angels, as well as this Church, these spectators, and your own consciences—your Pastor and these Elders, are witnesses. Your vows will be recorded in heaven; they will be publicly exhibited on your trial at the last day. Nevertheless, with these reflections you need not be overwhelmed. In the precious name of Jesus Christ, which is 'as ointment poured forth,' you may 'boldly enter into the holiest, by a new and living way, which HE hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh: and having a High Priest over the house of God, you may draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having your hearts sprinkled' with his atoning blood, 'from an evil conscience, and your bodies washed with pure water,' by baptism, according to his appointment. For 'this is he that came by water and blood,' even Jesus Christ; NOT

'by water only, but by water and blood: and it is the Spirit that beareth witness that the Spirit is truth.' God is indeed great in majesty, infinite in power, 'glorious in holiness,' inflexible in justice, and 'fearful' even in 'praises:' still, he is abundantly 'merciful and gracious;' and as such, manifests himself by graciously condescending, through Jesus Christ, to enter into covenant with sinners. You may venture then, in the filial spirit, IRREVERSIBLY thus to commit yourselves, and trust to his promised and inviolable 'faithfulness,' for strength to discharge your obligations, and perform your engagements.

DEDICATION.

"And now, in the presence of God, angels, and men, you do solemnly avouch the LORD JEHOVAH to be *your God and portion*, the object of your supreme love and delight; and THE LORD JESUS CHRIST to be your Saviour from sin and death, your *Prophet* to instruct you, your *Priest* to atone and intercede for you, and your *King* to rule, protect, and enrich you; and the HOLY GHOST to be your *Illuminator*, *Sanctifier*, *Comforter*, and *Guide*, looking to HIM for light, grace, and peace: unto this TRIUNE GOD—this wonderful '*Name of* THE FATHER, *and of* THE SON, *and of* THE HOLY GHOST,' into which we are baptized—you do now without reserve, give yourselves away, in a covenant never to be revoked, to be his willing servants for ever, to observe all his commandments and all his ordinances, in the sanctuary, in the family, and in the closet. You do also bind yourselves by covenant to this Church, to watch over us in the Lord, to seek our purity, peace, and edification, and conscientiously to submit to the government and discipline of Christ as here administered; counting it a privilege

and a favour—not a privation and a grievance,—to be subject in the Lord, to that authority which HIMSELF hath established in his church, and which HE hath made it not more the duty of his officers to exercise, than of his members to obey.

"All this, in the divine strength, you do severally profess and engage.

ACCEPTATION.

"In consequence of these your professions and engagements, we do affectionately open our arms to receive you as members of this Church, and, in the name of Christ, declare you entitled to all its visible privileges. We welcome you, as *brethren in Christ*, to this fellowship with us in the labours and the blessings, the toils and the honours, the crosses and the crowns, the trials and the rewards of the Gospel of our risen Redeemer: and on our part, engage, in his strength, to watch over you, to seek your edification, and to aid your progress through this wilderness to the fields of real pleasure beyond it. Should you have occasion, in providence, to remove from us, to live within the bounds or in the neighbourhood of another Church, we shall hold it our duty to give, *as it will be yours to seek*, a recommendation from us, which will place you under the watch and care of that portion of the family of Christ: for, hereafter, you can never withdraw from the pale of the church, or live in the neglect of sealing ordinances, without a breach of covenant.

EXHORTATION.

"And now, beloved in the Lord, let it be impressed on your minds that you have entered into a solemn condition, from which you can never escape. Wherever you may be, and however you may act,

these vows will remain upon you through life. They will follow you to the bar of God, and in whatever world you may be fixed, they will abide upon you to eternity. You can never again be as you have been! You have unalterably *committed* yourselves, and henceforth you MUST be the servants of God! Hereafter, the eyes of the world will be upon you, and as you demean yourselves, so will religion be honoured or disgraced. ***Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ***, and you will be a credit and comfort to us: but if it be otherwise, you will be to us a grief of heart, a stumbling-block, and a vexation! and if there be a wo pronounced upon him who offends *one* of Christ's *little ones*, ***wo***, ***wo*** to the person who offends a whole Church! ***But, dearly beloved, we hope better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*** May the Lord strengthen you, and give you a comfortable passage through this transitory life, and after its warfare shall be accomplished, bring us all together into that blessed Church, where our communion shall be for ever perfect, and our joy for ever full. Grace be with you. Amen."

Christians, ye who make this profession, and make it ***thus***, does not the subject require and demand your very serious consideration, and your devout and prayerful examination, whether you are sincere and consistent? Do you understand what is included in that all-comprehensive appellative, "A CHRISTIAN," in that public declaration, I AM a Christian? Have you studied your name, analyzed your profession? Are you aware what the world, the church, and angels expect from you, and what God and Christ *demand* of you? Or have you thrust yourself into the church, rushed to the Lord's table, and thoughtlessly

assumed the Christian name in ignorance! Do *you understand* your profession, and does the world believe that you are sincere in it? While you are telling them that you are Christ's, is your conduct such, that they are compelled to admit the truth of it? Do they see a copy of your profession written out in *living* characters upon all your conduct? Perhaps the view that has been given of the Christian profession may startle some of you and make you tremble: I wish it may; for there is need of trembling with some. Should you endeavour to protect yourself against these searching inquiries, by affirming that I have represented the subject in too alarming an aspect, and have made the Christian profession too comprehensive, and too strict, I ask for proof. My appeal is to your Bible. I cite but one passage, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."—Rom. xiv. 7—9. This is what is required in every professor of religion, to live and die for Christ; to have no separate existence from the dominion of Christ, so as to be enabled to say with the apostle, "for me to live is Christ." Is this our profession or is it not? If it be, are we aware of it, or are we ignorant of it? Too comprehensive and too strict it may be for some, and if so they are none of Christ's; they had better abandon a name which they do but dishonour, and a profession which they only contradict; but better still is it that by studying it afresh they should strive by divine grace to come up to the high and holy standard.

What cause for deep humiliation does this subject

afford to the most eminent and consistent professors. Even the best of them must take shame and confusion of face to themselves that they have lived so far beneath their own public declaration. Well is it there is mercy for saints, as well as sinners; for even the most distinguished of *them* must exclaim, "God be merciful to me a professor." O how little have we by ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years, honoured Christ, glorified God, recommended religion, strengthened the church, and blessed the world. Wherefore be ye clothed with humility.

Shall we not from this time begin afresh. Let us read over this imperfect outline of our profession, this sketch of our covenant with the Lord, this bond of surrendry to him, this record of our vows, and with a deliberate purpose, and a believing dependance on the promised help of the Spirit of God, let us consecrate ourselves afresh to the glory of Christ, according to the tenor of our Christian profession.

CHAPTER II.

THE OBLIGATION AND DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

It is every man's duty to confess Christ. But there is a previous duty to be performed, and that is to receive him. We should first *be* a Christian, and then *declare* ourselves such; and anxious, most anxious, yea tremblingly anxious should we be, not to advance to the second position, till we have taken up the first. Every thing is, or should be subsequent to this The business immediately to be done by any human being, any fallen creature, is to believe the Gospel, and be at peace with God. He should, without any delay, have the faith of God's elect, and as soon as he has it, he must avow it. We must not, either through timidity, or from any prudential considerations wish to keep our religion a secret, or covet to go by a secluded and unobserved path to heaven. It is not enough for us to commend ourselves *to God* as sincere, but we must acknowledge our faith "*before men.*" This is most clearly and most solemnly taught us by our Lord; "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven: but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. x. 32, 33. "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of *my words, in this* adulterous and sinful

generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."—Mark, viii. 37. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."—2 Cor. vi. 17. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."—Rom. x. 8—10. I have already described what this *con*fession means, and shown that it is substantially the same as *pro*fession: and it now only remains to bring forward these solemn passages in proof that it is our duty to make it. The bare reading of them is enough to show that this is binding upon our conscience, by all the weight of divine authority. Christ forbids not only open enmity but secret love; not only public rebellion, but concealed allegiance. He has *commanded* a profession, and made it one of the laws of his kingdom, under the peril of our being disowned by him: and he who refuses to comply with this law seems to put his salvation in jeopardy.

THE DESIGN AND USES of this profession are manifest, and should be constantly kept in view. I need scarcely premise that it is not to *make* us Christians, for it supposes that we are such already. It is a fearful, though it is to be apprehended, not an uncommon thing, for persons to substitute the profession for the possession, and to consider that they *become* Christians, by saying publicly they *are* such.

The ends of profession are various, some of them *refer to* CHRIST. It is confessing Christ, and intended, as we have already shown, to honour him by a

public declaration, that we have believed his divine mission, as the Son of God and Saviour of the world; the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest and King of his Church; that we worship him as our God, rely upon him as our Saviour, and serve him as our Master. This is, of course, to glorify him; it is to fulfil the prediction, that to him every knee should bow, and every tongue confess. Yes, every professor adds another voice to swell the chorus of praise that is rising to the honour of Jesus; adds another witness to the multitude that speak of him to the world, and roll his name round the globe; adds another trophy to the spoils which are accumulating in the Church to celebrate his victory over sin and Satan. It is a sweet and cheering reflection to the professor, that his very connexion with the Church, if it be maintained with consistency, is to the honour of Him who hath bought him with his blood.

But there are designs relating to *ourselves*. It rescues us from the reproach and wipes off the stigma of our being Christ's enemies, and puts upon us the honour of being accounted his friends. The great multitude of mankind lie under the disgrace of being the foes of Jesus; and this in appearance is the case with all who have not separated themselves from the number by a profession. There may be real Christians among them, who in other parts of their conduct are sufficiently distinguished from them, but they are like Peter in the hall of the High Priest, among the foes of Christ. They are in the enemy's camp, though they do not wear his colour and costume. When we join the Church, we say publicly, "Account me no longer an enemy of Christ. I believe in him, adore him, love him, and serve him." Who would not be eager to say this?

Who would have a shadow of a shade attaching to them of being his enemy? Who does not glory in the thought of saying to those who despise and reject him, "I am not one of you. I cannot treat the Saviour as you do."

Profession gives us a right and title to all the privileges and comforts of communion with his church. It is our saying to his disciples, "I come into the house in the Master's name, and take a seat at his table invited and accepted by him. He has given me a share in all the immunities of his family." It is therefore our act of association with his people, our title of admission to the fellowship of the faithful. Till we profess, they have no warrant to receive us, and when we do, they have no right to reject us. We have then a claim upon their confidence, their sympathy, their affection and their prayers; and they upon ours. How cheering the idea, that we have thus acquired an interest in the hearts of the brethren, the communion of the church, and the supplications of those who have power with God to prevail. The solemn festivities of the sacramental table, the consultations and decisions of the church meetings, the maintenance of the comely order of Christ's house, all belong to us then by grant and covenant.

Nor is *comfort* the only benefit that results to us by profession, but *holiness*, *help*, *safety*. Trees grow best in plantations and forests; so do Christians in church fellowship. Christ has gathered his people into churches, that they may enjoy the benefits of reciprocal watchfulness, care, help, and love. Christians do, or should, rally round one another, to warn them that are unruly, to comfort the feeble minded, to support the weak. They are commanded to exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through

the deceitfulness of sin. Profession draws many friendly eyes upon us, and many affectionate arms around and underneath us.

It is a bond upon our *constancy*. Publicity has a tendency to make us watchful and cautious We have taken up a character; we have placed ourselves on high; we have invited notice; we have said before many spectators—

> Here in thy courts I leave my vow,
> And thy rich grace record;
> Witness ye saints who hear me now
> If I forsake the Lord.

It might perhaps be thought that if a consciousness that the eye of God is upon us, be not enough to preserve us, the additional recollection that we are under the surveillance of our fellow-creatures will not increase our vigilance and circumspection. But this is contrary to fact. In certain states of mind we are wrought upon more by what we see, than by what we believe: the eye of faith may be sometimes too dim to see Him that is invisible, and then it is well that the eye of sense can see those that are visible.

Pastoral oversight is another benefit which profession brings to us, and is *designed* to bring. Is it no privilege, or even a small one, to have the wise counsels, the affectionate reproofs, the wakeful care, the tender sympathy, the fervent prayers of a minister of God?

Profession has a purpose that relates to THE CHURCH. It gives visibility to this holy community. The Church is God's witness in the world, and every one who joins it strengthens the testimony. It speaks by its embodied piety, and by its united voice, for Christ. Every one who enters its communion

adds something to its strength and its stability. But for profession, it would cease to appear as a Church. Nor does each professor only add to the visibility, and do something for the permanency of the Church, but also for its utility. It is God's instrument for illuminating and converting the world: the golden candlestick containing the lamp of truth; the magazine of ways and means for evangelizing the nations of the earth; and every one who becomes a member carries an addition of zeal and piety to render it more and more efficient.

Profession is for THE WORLD. This we have already shown in what we have just considered, but it might be more extensively dwelt upon. "Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world," said Christ to his disciples. The Church is the pillar and ground of truth, intended to hold up, to send round, to hand down, the truth; to show what truth *is*, what faith *is*, what holiness *is*; to exhibit the text and a living comment upon it too: to send out life-giving voices attended by life-giving actions; to speak for God *to*, and act for God *upon*, the dark and inert mass around. The true Church of Christ is evidently designed not only to receive the truth by faith for its own sake, but to reflect it, by profession, for the world's sake. It seems to bear much the same relation to the word of God, as the moon does the sun; and to perform somewhat the same function in the spiritual economy as the satelite does in the planetary system. It is not the original source of light, for that is the Bible; but it is the recipient and depository of this light, which it receives for its own benefit, and reflects for the benefit of a benighted world. The church revolves in the attraction of this moral orb, and exhibits to those who would not otherwise receive them, its glorious beams. Hence,

by the Lord's Supper, which is strictly and exclusively an ecclesiastical ordinance, the church is said to "*show forth*" the death of Christ till his second coming. The word signifies to "publish openly and effectually," "to declare in a joyful and emphatic manner." To whom is this declaration to be made? Not to the church, for they are to make it. Not to the angels or spirits made perfect, for they do not need it; but to the careless, impenitent, and unbelieving world. The death of Christ, as a sacrifice for sin, is the great truth of Christianity; it is not so much a doctrine of scripture, as the scripture itself; it is in fact, *the new covenant:* and the church, gathered round the sacramental table, and jointly partaking of the elements of bread and wine, in believing remembrance of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, is, in that act, as well as by its well known publicly declared sentiments, a witness for Christ, and a preacher of him to the world. He is thus evidently set forth crucified for sinners, who are thereby invited to behold him as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. Every time the church is gathered together, the "Bride," the Lamb's wife, lifts up her entreating voice, on behalf of her divine Lord, and says to those who are despising and rejecting him, "Come to Christ for salvation." Every professor, therefore, who joins himself to the church, both by his declaration of faith and his approaches to the table of the Lord, sends forth the invitation to unbelievers, "Come to Jesus, and be saved."*

The visible Church, i. e. the collective body of

* Does not this expression of the apostle's plainly prove that the Lord's Supper ought to be observed publicly before the whole congregation? How else can we by that act "*show forth*" *the death of Christ?*

professors is, I repeat, the golden candlestick placed in a dark world to hold forth in their profession the light of truth, of holiness, of love, and consequently of happiness. This light, it is true, shines forth as we have said from the word, but the great multitude will not come within the range of its rays; and it is therefore designed by a merciful God intent upon their salvation, that it shall be reflected upon them in a manner which they cannot avoid, in the conduct of those who profess to have received it. Hence, believers in that one solemn scene, where they are brought together round the visible symbols of their redemption and their union, are said to show forth the Lord's death till he come. Every consistent professor is a light shining in a dark place, shining not for himself but for others; shining to guide men to Christ, to his church, and to his heaven: a friendly lamp in the world's dark course, to assist them in finding their way to everlasting life. Can any thing be mentioned more solemnly admonitory as to the duties of professors or their responsibility? How clearly should the light of truth shine forth in an enlarged, correct, and scriptural acquaintance with the doctrines of grace. How clearly should the light of holiness shine forth in all holy conversation and godliness! How clearly should the light of love shine forth in brotherly kindness and charity! And how clearly should the light of happiness shine forth in the peace that passeth understanding, and the joy unspeakable and full of glory! O, let it not be forgotten that a profession is designed to be a light for the world; and then again it may be asked, "What manner of men ought we to be?"

Have we considered these matters deliberately and with an intelligent mind? Have we asked our-

selves the solemn question, "For what purpose have I come out of the world into the church, and have I answered, and am I answering that purpose? Am I a living martyr and faithful witness for Christ?—making him known and causing him to be loved? Am I an index to the cross, a waymark to heaven? Do I bear the image of Christ, and show the world for what purpose he came into the world, and died upon Calvary? Am I a useful addition to the church, increasing not only its bulk, but its strength, its beauty, and its health!—giving it visibility, not only as an ecclesiastical corporation of nominal Christians, but as the receptacle of heavenly communications, the vestibule of the celestial temple, yea, the tabernacle of God with man, and having the glory of Jehovah? Have I added any thing to its spiritual excellence, and its moral power? Or have I been a mere appendage, a lifeless adjunct, a useless addition, and more of an incumbrance than a help to its utility? As regards myself, what benefit have I derived from my profession? I have obtained a public right to church privileges; have taken my seat at the table of the Lord, and appropriated to myself my share of the blessings of fellowship and the prayers of the brethren. What am I the holier and happier for these things? Have I grown in grace, and found the communion of saints to aid me in a preparation for the fellowship of the blessed in heaven? Have I found that my profession has indeed proved a bond upon my constancy, and made me watchful, circumspect, and cautious? Has it separated me from the world, and *kept* me separate in association, spirit, and conduct? I have had the watchful eye of my pastor upon me, and have received his admonitions publicly and privately, and am I the better for this, and a comfort to his heart? As respects the

world, what good has it derived from me? Has the end of my profession been accomplished in reference to the unconverted part of mankind? What have they seen in me calculated to subdue their prejudices against religion, and to conciliate their affection to it? Have I shown them the light of truth, the beauty of holiness, and the power of love? Like a lesser magnet touched by the mighty loadstone of Mount Calvary, have I drawn men to Christ? Are there any who in looking to me, will say, there is the instrument of my conversion?"

Such interrogatories as these ought to be pressed home by every professor on his conscience at seasons, and such should frequently occur, of solemn examination into the state of the soul.

It may be, that some will read these pages who have not yet publicly professed faith in Christ although they have reason to hope that they possess it? But why not profess it? Have you considered our Lord's demand, Mark viii. 37; or the apostle's declaration, Rom. x. 8? Sit down and study those passages—ponder them well—apply them to your own case: and will you any longer believe secretly when required to profess publicly? "I am startled," you say, "at the vast comprehension of a profession." True, it is vast: but it is demanded of you yes, both the possession and profession. "I am afraid I shall disgrace my profession if I make it, as many have already done." True, they have: millions of souls have been helped on to perdition by the misconduct of nominal Christians: and you ought to tremble at the idea of adding to the number: but God's grace is sufficient for you. The way of duty is the way of safety, and none are so likely to be kept from falling as they who enter on their course with a holy *fear* of falling. Besides

are you not dishonouring God by making *no* profession, and are thus guilty of the inconsistency of actually doing wrong lest you should do it? "But I can go to heaven without making a profession." How do you know that? Perhaps not. It may be necessary for *you*, although some others may have reached the heavenly shore without it. It is not for us to say of any obvious duty, "I can go to heaven without it." Not that I mean to insinuate justification is by works; or, that absolute perfection is essential to salvation—but what I mean is this; God requires obedience in *all* cases of known duty, and where we make exceptions, he may be so displeased as to give us up to ourselves, and leave us to turn back again to the world. "But if I make a profession I shall displease my friends." "Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, and with his holy angels."—Mark. viii. 34—38. This is unbending, awful language. What is the favour or displeasure of friends to this? Is there aught in the fear or frown of any mortal under heaven, that should deter us from our duty in the view of such a peril as this?

"But my parents or my husband do not make a profession, nor are they fit for it, and they would not like me to join the church without them, and I should scarcely like it myself." If they will not

go to heaven, should that allow you to rej
the means that help you thither? If the
honour Christ, should that hinder you fror
Will you disobey the Saviour out of con
any earthly friend whatever? It is your
solemn duty; and is it better to please me
Perhaps your decision in this matter may
to them. If not, you are to do what is rig
considering consequences.

Abandon excuses and objections then, a
with the mouth, even as God has given
to believe with the heart.

CHAPTER III.

THE DANGERS OF SELF-DECEPTION.

The professors of Christianity may be divided into three classes,—the sincere, the hypocritical, and the self-deceived. Of the second class there are very few. I have rarely met with them. It is not often that any one attains to such a pitch of audacious and disgusting wickedness, as to make, for some sinister purpose, a profession, which, at the time, he knows to be false. But, while there are few that are intentionally deceiving others, there are very many who are, unconsciously, deceiving themselves. Alarming consideration! To be self-deceived in a matter of such tremendous importance as the salvation of the immortal soul! To suppose that we are justified before God, while we are under the condemnation of his righteous law; that we are truly regenerated, while we are still in an unconverted state; that we are the children of God, while we are the children of the devil; and that we are travelling to heaven, while each day, as it passes, leaves us nearer to the bottomless pit! The very possibility of such a case should rouse our lukewarm souls, excite all our fears, and put us upon the most cautious and diligent examination.

PROFESSION IS NOT POSSESSION.

This common, hackneyed, yea true and impressive sentiment, is thus put out by itself, in bold and promi-

nent relief, that it may attract the reader's attention, and come upon his heart and conscience with all possible emphasis. A church member is not necessarily a real Christian; and outward communion with the members, is no certain proof of vital union with the Divine Head. It is to be feared that fatal mistakes are made by many on this momentous subject. Among those who pay little or no attention to religion, it is very commonly supposed, that dying is, somehow or other, to fit them for heaven; that some mysterious change is to pass upon them then, by which they shall be meetened for the kingdom of glory; as if death were a converting ordinance, instead of a mere physical change; a sacrament of grace, instead of a mere dissolution of our compound nature. Others attach the same mistaken notion to the act of uniting with a Christian church; making a profession of religion, and receiving the Lord's Supper, is, in some way or other, to effect a change in them, and, by a process of which they can form no definite idea, make them true Christians. But there are others, who, better taught, attach no such incorrect opinions to church fellowship; who admit the necessity of faith and regeneration, as prerequisites to communion, but who, after all, deceive themselves in the supposition that they possess those qualifications

FIRST.—*I shall prove that such self-deception is not only possible, but frequent.*

This is evident from the many warnings against it contained in the apostolic writings. "*Be not deceived,*" is an admonition thrice repeated by Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians.—Chapter iii. 16; vi. 9; xv. 33. How impressive is his language to the Galatians, "If any man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth

himself."—Galatians, vi. 3. The apostle James follows up the same subject. "Do not err, my beloved brethren—Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."—James, i. 16, 22. What solemn admonitions are in other places given on the work of self-scrutiny! "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates"—2. Cor. xiii. 5. "Let every man prove his own work."—Gal. vi. 4. But what can equal the force and impressiveness of the apostle's language and caution in reference to himself? "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that, by any means, after I have preached to others, *I myself should be a cast-away*."—1 Cor. ix. 27. If such a man, the greatest, the holiest, the most distinguished member, minister, and apostle of the Christian church, found it necessary to exercise such caution, what must be the need of it on our part?

The danger of self-deception is also apparent from the alarming declarations of Christ. In the parable of the sower, he divided the hearers of the word into four classes, of which one only is composed of sincere believers, although two at least out of the other three, are represented as receiving the word, and professing it for awhile. How solemn and awakening are his words in the sermon upon the Mount. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I pro-

fess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity."—Matt. vii. 21—23. These persons were not only professors, but of high standing in the church; they were confident of their safety—yet they were lost! and there were *many* of them!!

Dwell upon the FACTS recorded in the New Testament—Judas, though he ended as a dissembling hypocrite, began, in all probability, as a self-deceived professor. One *apostle* out of twelve a false professor! What multitudes at one time followed Christ, and in some way believed on him, among whom were many of the rulers of the Jews; and yet so great was the number that afterwards abandoned their profession, that our Lord put this question to the twelve,—"Will *ye*, also, go away?" implying, that the rest had nearly all left him. Peter speaks of some "who, after they had known the way of righteousness, had turned from the holy commandment delivered unto them."—2 Peter, ii. 21: and John, in describing the case of some in his time, says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us."—1 John, ii. 19. Let any one read attentively the addresses to the seven churches of Asia Minor, contained in the second and third chapters of the Apocalypse, and observe the description of those communities, given by one who could not err; they seem to have contained, at least some of them, a great proportion of merely nominal Christians. Yet these were churches under the care of an apostle.

Does not our observation confirm the fact of the danger of self-deception? To say nothing of open apostates who turn back to sin, error, or the world, and who are cast out of the church, how many are

there that still remain, who, though their inconsistencies are not sufficiently gross to make them the subjects of discipline, too plainly indicate by their total want of all spirituality and earnestness of piety, that they have nothing of Christianity but the name! It is no violation of the law of charity to say, that persons so worldly in their spirit, so unsanctified in their temper, so little interested by the concerns of Christ's kingdom, either in their own church or in the world at large, are making but an empty and heartless profession.

However painful, then, the fact may be, it *is* a fact, that the danger of self-deception is alarmingly great.

SECONDLY. *Let us now inquire into the causes of this delusion.*

The first and chief is, mistaking the forms and restraint of a religious education, or a little temporary excitement of the feelings, for a real change of heart. Nothing short of this change is true piety. As partakers of a fallen and corrupt nature, we must be *renewed*, and not merely a little altered. "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." The imagination may be interested, the feelings may be moved, the conduct improved, and yet the heart remain unchanged. As long as this is the case, there is no abiding principle, no root of godliness in the soul. Every thing but the new nature will subside; all will fall off but this It is to be expected that, under the exciting preaching of the present day, many will be impressed, seem to be converted, and walk well for a time, who are not renewed; their opinions are scriptural, their conduct is correct, and they are admitted to the church upon a profession of their faith; and *there is no* reason why they

should not be. After a while the novelty of religion ceases, their affections grow cold, and although they do not, perhaps, become profligate, or leave the church, they settle down into a mere formal attendance upon the means of grace, and remain in this miserable state, till death sends them into the eternal world.

The danger is increased by *the present external peace and unmolested liberty of the church.* In the primitive days of Christianity, and often since, the profession of religion was attended with imminent peril of goods, liberty, or life. Persecuting laws were in force against those who believed in Jesus, and confessed their faith. They had, indeed, to take up their cross! and it was through much tribulation they entered the kingdom of God. In such circumstances it might be imagined, no man would profess himself a Christian, who was not really one. We can suppose that a prison and a stake, would be a sufficient check, not only upon hypocrisy, but upon mere nominal religion. But even this was not always effectual—self-deception existed even then. How much more likely is it that it should prevail now, when a profession of piety, so far from exposing us to scorn, contempt, and suffering, is a means of procuring for us an increase of esteem and affection? Evangelical religion and an avowal of it, are become almost fashionable. There is now no fiery ordeal to pass through as a test of our sincerity; no sifting process to separate the chaff from the wheat; and, as a natural, though fatal consequence, many profess religion, who are strangers to its power and efficacy.

The wide and easy access to communion which is afforded by some churches increases the danger. It cannot be said of them, as it is of the church

mentioned in the word of God, that their gates shall be opened continually, and shall not be shut day nor night; for they can scarcely be said to have any gates at all; or if they have, there is no porter at the gate, to ask the sign of him who enters. True it is, the entrance ought not to be made narrower than Christ has made it. No unscriptural terms of communion should be imposed; no bars nor obstacles set up to keep out those who have a right to enter in; no scaring usages adopted to frighten away timid minds:—but surely somebody, either pastor, or people, or both together, should, with holy caution, Christian tenderness, and experienced minds, examine those who wish to be admitted to fellowship; not, indeed, for the sake of indulging and showing inquisitorial authority, but for guarding the young disciple against deception; and, also, if he be not correct in his views either of the truth or of himself, for teaching him the way of God more perfectly. If, therefore, nothing more be required, than for a person to declare himself a Christian without any examination, how great is the danger of his "thinking he is something while he is nothing."

The injudicious persuasions of ministers and friends, have led many to make a profession of religion, before, in fact, they had any real religion to profess. A too eager wish to have a large church, and thus to magnify their pastoral importance, and to multiply the proofs of their usefulness, a most censurable, because injurious kind of ministerial vanity, has made some far too hasty in introducing persons to Christian communion; others, from feelings of false delicacy have, amidst many suspicions of its sincerity encouraged a profession, rather than wound the minds of the candidates, by suggesting a doubt of their real conversion to God. While there are

some, who, acting upon the supposition that religious impressions are likely to ripen into conversion by the advantages of church fellowship, encourage the subjects of them to come forward and publicly profess their faith in Christ before they have any. Nor is the conduct of some good people less injudicious sometimes towards their relations. A husband feels a pang in his heart at every sacramental season, at the wife of his bosom rising and retiring from his side, when he is about to receive the eucharistic memorials. To a wife, who to all her natural affection for her husband, adds a tender solicitude for his eternal welfare, it is a great and painful deduction from her spiritual enjoyment that she goes alone to the supper of the Lord. Parents long to have their children with them in the fellowship of the church. Hence, in all these cases, there is sometimes much persuasion used to induce the unprofessing relative to assume the name, and make the confession of a Christian. Now, where there is a firm hope, a hope founded on convincing evidence, that the object of solicitude is truly regenerated, and made a partaker of saving grace, this is very proper:—but where this evidence is wanting, where there is no good ground for believing that a spiritual change has taken place, it is a most misplaced and mischievous anxiety to wish such persons to enter into the church. It is aiding their self-deception, and being accessory to a delusion, which places them at the farthest remove from salvation. They are much more likely to be converted out of the church than in it. Many who have persuaded their friends to make an untimely, because insincere profession, have lived to repent of their mistaken anxiety, by seeing accumulating evidence that their relative, though a church member, was certainly not a Christian.

The improper reliance that some professors have upon the strict mode of examination adopted by most of our churches is another source of delusion. They have been interrogated by the pastor, whose scrutiny has been aided by some of the deacons or members; they have submitted, either verbally or in writing, a statement of their opinions and feelings, as well as a history of their alleged conversion to God, and on this ground have been received and approved, as truly regenerated. "Can such judges," they ask themselves, "be mistaken? Such examiners, so competent, so impartial, so particular, form a wrong conclusion? No!" Their piety is thus authenticated, their profession attested, and their safety undoubted. All is right. Such is their reasoning; and when in after times a doubt is raised, raised perhaps on grounds which ought to be conclusive, as to the fact of the falseness of their profession, they silence the voice of conscience, by pleading against its testimony, their admission to the church, after the most rigid examination. Hence, the importance of the pastor's never giving, at the admission of a member, an opinion that he is truly converted, but throwing the whole judgment of the case upon the member's own conscience as in the sight of a heart-searching God; and thus making *him* responsible for the consequences of any wrong conclusion he may draw concerning his spiritual condition.

Look at these things, and learn whence the danger comes, and how imminent the danger is of self-delusion as to our state before God, and our safety for eternity. It is not saying too much to affirm, that *multitudes* are thus deluded. The dark memorial of the Laodicean church is a fearful proof that whole communities of professing Christians may be in this appalling condition. It is one of the cunning

artifices, the deep devices, the artful machinations of Satan, to lead men into self-deception, when he can no longer hold them in careless indifference; to ruin their souls in the church, when he cannot effect it in the world; to lull them asleep by the privileges of communion, when he cannot continue their slumber amidst the pleasures of sin. O how many is he leading captive this way? How many is he conducting to perdition, whom he has first blindfolded with the bandage of a false profession? How many are there in all our churches, who are in this awful state!

THIRDLY, *We now contemplate the consequences of this self-deception.*

It corrupts the purity of the church. Members in this state, are the wood, hay, and stubble, in the walls of the spiritual temple, which disfigure its beauty and impair its strength. They are Achans that trouble the camp of Israel, and bring down the displeasure of the Lord upon its hosts. They are the disease of the spiritual body which swell its bulk, but destroy its health. Do they by their prayers bring down the blessing of God upon the pastor or the members? Alas! they pray not for themselves. Do they by their piety diffuse vitality and energy through the community? They are cold, lifeless, dead. Do they by their consistency attract others to the church? On the contrary, they disgust and repel. Instead of aiding the force of that concentrated light, by which the church shines upon the dark world around, they envelop it with smoke. Instead of acting as the salt of the earth, they bring corruption into the kingdom of Christ. They are not only negatively an injury, but positively: they do harm at all times, but especially on occasion of strife, they are the fuel that feed the flames of discord.

As it respects religion they disparage and injure it, not so much by raising against it the cry of hypocrisy on the ground of their immorality, as by lowering its standard, depreciating its value, diminishing its power, carnalizing and secularizing it, and reducing it to a greater conformity to the spirit of the world: so that many persons seeing no difference between such professors and themselves, except the mere circumstance of profession, think such a religion not worth their notice.

But as to the nominal professor *himself*, how truly awful is the consequence of his delusion. He is perhaps the most hopeless character on earth. Before he assumed the name of Christ, there was hope of him that he would be impressed, convinced, and converted, by some of those discriminating discourses which point out the difference between a regenerated and an unregenerated man; those pungent appeals to the conscience which are so often blessed in awakening them that are without—but now he is proof against all these. He is a professor, a church member; and with this as his shield he wards off every arrow of conviction from his heart. These things he says are for the unprofessing, not for him. Quietly his conscience sleeps amidst all the thunders that roll from the pulpit, while the lightnings carried off by the conductor of his profession, touch not his false hopes, and leave him amidst all secure. He puts away from himself all the threatenings of the word, though they are pointed at him, and takes to himself all the privileges and consolations of the righteous, though he enjoys none of them. If at any time the power of the deception begins to be shaken by the efforts of a half-awakened conscience, and there rises up a suspicion, that he is not a truly religious man, Satan aids him to regain his delusive

quietude by the usual suggestion, that he is a professor, a church member, and that though he is not perfect, he is not farther from it than many others: he only partakes of the general delusion of the times, and if he be wrong, who is right? Besides, what is he to do? He is a church member, and would he begin again? Would he repent, believe, and be converted now? Such logic is generally successful, and the poor creature lies down again to sleep on the sleep of death. Notwithstanding the great number of professing Christians which exist, and the great numbers of unconverted ones too, how rarely do we meet with any who were converted after they became professors? How seldom do any such come to their pastor, and express a fear, and follow it up, that they have never heen truly changed.

Hence it is, that some ministers feel it to be the greatest perplexity of all their pastoral avocations, to give answers to persons, who come to advise with them on the subject of making a profession. If from suspicion that their hearts are not yet right with God they dissuade them, they may be discouraging those whom they ought to receive and encourage: sending away a babe that ought to be laid in the bosom of the church: breaking the bruised reed and quenching the smoking flax:—while on the other hand, if they encourage the inquirer to come forward, they may be strengthening the delusion of a self-deceived soul, and become accessory to the ruin of an immortal spirit. Some conscientious men have found and felt this to be the very burden of their lives, and from which there is no way of gaining relief or ease, but by laying down the marks of true conversion, begging the querist to bring forward his heart to this test, stating what is implied in a Christian profession, and making him, as has been already

said, responsible for the judgment of his own case, and all its consequences too.

But extend your views to another world, and anticipate, if you can, the consequences of self-deception as they exist and are perpetuated through Christianity. Bunyan, in his inimitable allegory, the "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS," after representing the rejection of a false professor, called Ignorance, who had knocked at the portals of heaven, and asked admission, concludes his book with these awfully impressive words, "*Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the city of destruction.*"

A professor in hell!! Tremendous idea! Horrifying thought! After spending his time on earth in the nominal communion of saints, to spend his eternity in the real fellowship of devils in hell! After belonging to the society of God's people; joining in all their services and their privileges; transacting with them the business of his kingdom; uniting with them in the expulsion as well as the reception of members —then to be sent away into the prison of lost souls. O how dreadful would it be to be separated from the church of God now, to pass under the sentence of excommunication, to be exscinded as a corrupt member of the body, and given over to Satan—but what is this to the sentence of excommunication from the church triumphant, pronounced by Jesus Christ himself at the last day? O to hear him say, *depart!* Who does not feel the force of those impressive verses;—

Thou lovely chief of all my joys,
Thou sovereign of my heart,
How could I bear to hear thy voice,
Pronounce the sound, depart?

The thunder of that dismal word
Would so torment my ear,
'Twould tear my soul asunder, Lord,
With most tormenting fears.

O wretched state of deep despair,
To see my God remove,
And fix my doleful station where
I could not taste his love.

FOURTHLY.—Let us now consider *what means are necessary and proper for you to adopt to avoid deception.* Dwell upon the subject. *Ponder it deeply.* Let it take hold upon your mind, and your mind take hold upon it. Let it not be dismissed from you with the same ease as you send into oblivion many other subjects of a religious nature. It is unusually momentous, and has an awfulness about it far beyond the usual topics of reflection. The very idea is terrific, *a self-deceived professor;* a professor going to perdition! The frequency of it makes it still more alarming. If it were only a bare possibility, an occurrence that might exist, yet that rarely did exist, it would still demand our serious attention—but when it is so common, that it is to be feared there is scarcely any church in which there are not some in this situation, and no large church in which there are not many, how serious, how alarming a matter does it become!

You should bring the matter *home to yourselves,* and admit not only the possibility of the danger in the abstract, or in reference to others, but in reference to *you.* Your profession does not necessarily imply the actual possession of religion. You must not receive it as evidence that *you* are Christians. In those moments, and such it is presumed you spend, when with more than usual anxiety you ask *the question,* "Am I really a child of God?" it is

not enough to reply, "I am a professor:" for this in any state of the church, and especially the present one, is not a proof, scarcely a presumption, that you are born again of the Spirit. It is possible then, that *you* may be deceived, and you should not imagine that there is any thing in your circumstances to render the idea inapplicable to you.

You should *dread the thought of being deluded.* Its fearful consequences should be solemnly meditated upon, seriously and piously revolved. It should be often said with holy trembling, "Oh, if I should be at last deceived!"

You should *examine your state*, frequently, deliberately, solemnly, and impartially. Time should be set apart, occasionally, for the special purpose of prayer and self-scrutiny. You should have times and opportunities of more than usual length and earnestness for self-examination, when you should look again, and with more intenseness, upon your evidences of personal religion. When your former and your present state, your supposed conversion, your conduct, and the state of your affections, shall all come under review,—when with a wish not to be deceived, you shall ask yourselves for the reasons of the hope that is in you. It is too important a matter to be taken for granted; the consequences of deception are too awful and remediless to be carelessly risked.

Nor is it enough to trust to your own examination. Aware of the deceitfulness of the human heart, and our proneness through self-love to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, and at the same time recollecting how much interest we have in believing we are right, *you should beseech God to make known to you your real condition.*

You should carry to him the prayer of David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—Psalm, cxxxix. 23, 24. You should deal honestly with God, and tell him that you wish to know your state, and that you deprecate as the heaviest judgment that could befall you, being deceived.

If you have reason, upon examination, to think you have taken up a false opinion of your case, do not blind yourselves to your condition; do not conclude against evidence, that you are safe; do not attempt to silence the voice of conscience or corrupt its testimony: this is worse than useless, it is most alarmingly dangerous, and is the last stage of the delusion. Instead of this, *begin afresh.* What is to hinder you? If you are not converted, you may be. Let not the idea of a false profession throw you into despondency. God is as willing to forgive the sin of a false profession as the sin of no profession. The blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse you from this sin. *Now* repent, now believe, now hope, now love. God waits to be gracious even yet. It is not too late to be renewed yet. The door of mercy is not closed yet. Sincerity of profession is not beyond your reach yet. Begin to be in earnest. Determine to trifle no longer. Set apart time for private prayer, reading the scriptures, and holy meditation. Be diligent in attendance upon the public means of grace. Make a fresh and entire surrender of yourself to God. But especially look by faith to Jesus Christ, for the pardon of your past insincerity, lukewarmness, and worldliness. Be humble, very humble in your own eyes, and before God; but still

do not despair. Exercise dependance upon the Spirit of all grace, confide in his power, and rely upon his mercy. Be thankful that since you were in error, you have discovered it, and have not been permitted to go on in darkness till you had stumbled over the precipice into the yawning pit of destruction below.

If upon examination, you have good reason to think all is right, rejoice in Christ Jesus. Let the peace of God which passeth all understanding, rule in your hearts, to which ye are called, and be ye thankful. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." This discourse is intended not to disturb the peace of God's people, but to destroy the false confidence of his disguised foes. There are two classes of professors to whom the alarming appeals of it do not apply; the first, are those eminent Christians who have the fullest assurance of hope, and whose assurance is sustained by the joy of faith, the obedience of love, and the patience and purity of hope: whose religion is so vigorous and influential as to be self-evident to themselves and others. They have scarcely need to ask the question, "Am I a child of God?" for the proofs of it are ever within them. Blessed state! happy Christians! and all are invited to become such. But there is another class who are not likely to be deceived; those who are truly, and sometimes sorrowfully, anxious about the matter; who are often trying themselves by the Word of God; who know, if they know any thing, they would not be deluded for ten thousand worlds; who, notwithstanding their many imperfections, their painful consciousness of defects, still know they do love the Lord Jesus Christ, though with too lukewarm an affection; who, notwithstanding all their doubts and

fears, are conscious of a real and sometimes a
tense longing after holiness. Be comforted, ye
followers of the Lamb: self-deceivers are r
afraid that this is their state and character. Di
your fears and go on your way rejoicing.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUNG PROFESSOR.

By the Young Professor, I mean the person lately converted, and who has but recentlv assumed the Christian name, whether in the morning or the meridian of his days. I cannot do better than submit to the consideration of such persons, the following judicious advice given by the justly celebrated Jonathan Edwards, of America, to a young lady, who had just commenced the life of faith.

"My dear young Friend,

"As you desired me to send you in writing, some directions how to conduct yourself in your Christian course, I would now answer your request. The sweet remembrance of the great things I have lately seen at S———, inclines me to do any thing in my power, to contribute to the spiritual joy and prosperity of God's people there.

"1. I would advise you to keep up as great a strife and earnestness in religion as if you knew yourself to be in a state of nature, and were seeking conversion. We advise persons under conviction, to be earnest and violent for the kingdom of heaven; but when they have attained to conversion, they ought not to be the less watchful, laborious, and earnest in the whole work of religion; but the more so, for they are under infinitely greater obligations. For *want of this,* many persons, in a few *months after their conversion,* have begun to lose

their sweet and lively sense of spiritual things, and to grow cold and dark, and have 'pierced themselves through with many sorrows;' whereas, if they had done as the apostle did, (Philippians, iii. 12–14.) their path would have been 'as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'

"2. Do not leave off seeking, striving, and praying for the very same things that we exhort unconverted persons to strive for, and a degree of which you have had already in conversion. Pray that your eyes may be opened, that you may receive sight, that you may know yourself, and be brought to God's footstool; and that you may see the glory of God and Christ, and may be raised from the dead, and have the love of Christ shed abroad in your heart. Those who have most of these things, have need still to pray for them; for there is so much blindness and hardness, pride and death remaining, that they still need to have that work of God wrought upon them, further to enlighten and enliven them, that shall be bringing them out of darkness into God's marvellous light, and be a kind of new conversion and resurrection from the dead. There are very few requests that are proper for an impenitent man, that are not also, in some sense, proper for the godly.

"3. When you hear a sermon, hear for yourself. Though what is spoken may be more especially directed to the unconverted, or to those that, in other respects, are in different circumstances from yourself; yet, let the chief intent of your mind be to consider, 'In what respect is this applicable to me? and what improvement ought I to make of this, for my own soul's good?'

"4. Though God has forgiven and forgotten your

past sins, yet do not forget them yourself: often remember, what a wretched bond-slave you were in the land of Egypt. Often bring to mind your particular acts of sin before conversion; as the blessed apostle, Paul, is often mentioning his old blaspheming, persecuting spirit, and his injuriousness to the renewed, humbling his heart, and acknowledging that he was the least of the apostles, and not worthy 'to be called an apostle,' and the 'least of all saints,' and the 'chief of sinners;' and be often confessing your old sins to God, and let that text be often in your mind, 'that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.'

"5. Remember, that you have more cause, on some accounts, a thousand times to lament and humble yourself for sins that have been committed since conversion, than before, because of the infinitely greater obligations that are upon you to live to God, and to look upon the faithfulness of Christ, in unchangeably continuing his loving kindness, notwithstanding all your great unworthiness since your conversion.

"6. Be always greatly abased for your remaining sin, and never think that you lie low enough for it; but yet be not discouraged or disheartened by it; for, though we are exceeding sinful, yet we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; the preciousness of whose blood, the merit of whose righteousness, and the greatness of whose love and faithfulness, infinitely overtop the highest mountain of our sins.

"7. When you engage in the duty of prayer, or come to the Lord's Supper, or attend any other duty of divine worship, come to Christ as Mary Magda-

lene did;—(Luke, vii. 37, 38;) come, and cast yo self at his feet, and kiss them, and pour forth u him the sweet perfumed ointment of divine love, of a pure and broken heart, as she poured the p cious ointment out of her pure broken alabaster b

"8. Remember, that pride is the worst viper t is in the human heart, the greatest disturber of t soul's peace, and of sweet communion with Chri it was the first sin committed, and lies the lowest the foundation of Satan's whole building, and is w the greatest difficulty rooted out, and is the m hidden, secret, and deceitful of all lusts, and of creeps insensibly into the midst of religion, ev sometimes, under the disguise of humility itself.

"9. That you may pass a correct judgment c cerning yourself, always look upon those as the l discoveries, and the best comforts, that have mos these two effects: those that make you least lowest, and most like a child; and those that n engage and fix your heart in a full and firm disp tion to deny yourself for God, and to spend anc spent for him.

"10. If at any time you fall into doubts about state of your soul, into dark and dull frame mind, it is proper to review your past experie but do not consume too much time and strengt this way: rather apply yourself, with all might, to an earnest pursuit after renewed e rience, new light, and new lively acts of faith love. One new discovery of the glory of Chr face, will do more toward scattering clouds of d ness in one minute, than examining old experie by the best marks that can be given throu whole year.

"11. When the exercise of grace is low, corruption prevails, and by that means fear prev

do not desire to have fear cast out any other way, than by the reviving and prevailing of love in the heart: by this, fear will be effectually expelled, as darkness in a room vanishes away, when the pleasant beams of the sun are let into it.

"12. When you counsel and warn others, do it earnestly, and affectionately, and thoroughly: and when you are speaking to your equals, let your warnings be intermixed with expressions of your sense of your own unworthiness, and of the sovereign grace that makes you to differ.

"13. If you would set up religious meetings of young women by yourselves, to be attended once in a while, besides the other meetings you attend, I should think it would be very proper and profitable.

"14. Under special difficulties, or when in great need of, or great longings after, any particular mercy for yourself or others, set apart a day for secret prayer and fasting by yourself alone; and let the day be spent, not only in petitions for the mercies you desire, but in searching your heart, and in looking over your past life, and confessing your sins before God, not as is done in public prayer, but by a very particular rehearsal before God of the sins of your past life, from your childhood hitherto, before and after conversion, with the circumstances and aggravations attending them, and spreading all the abominations of your heart very particularly, and as fully as possible, before him.

"15. Do not let the adversaries of the cross have occasion to reproach religion on your account. How holily should the children of God, the redeemed and the beloved of the Son of God, behave themselves. Therefore, 'walk as children of the light, and of the day,' and 'adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour;' and especially, abound in what are called the Chris-

tian virtues, and which make you like the Lamb of God: be meek and lowly of heart, and full of pure, heavenly, and humble love to all; abound in deeds of love to others, and self-denial for others; and let there be in you a disposition to account others better than yourself.

"16. In all your course, walk with God, and follow Christ, as a little, poor, helpless child, taking hold of Christ's hand, keeping your eye on the marks of the wounds in his hands and side, whence came the blood that cleanses you from sin, and hiding your nakedness under the skirt of the white shining robes of his righteousness.

"17. Pray much for the ministers and the church of God; especially that he would carry on his glorious work which he has now begun, till the world shall be full of his glory.

J. E."

If it be necessary to add any thing to the contents of this excellent letter, I would deliver it in the following particulars.

Set out in your profession with clear and impressive ideas of what it implies, and for what purpose it is to be made; and for this end, read with great attention the previous chapters which treat on these subjects.

Seek to possess and to retain a comfortable sense of your interest in the blessings of salvation, even the witness of the Spirit that you are a child of God; and remember that evidence of piety is not so much to be sought in strong and high emotions of any kind, as in real humility, self-distrust, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, sorrow for sin, and a continual effort to regulate your thoughts, feelings, and conduct by the word of God.

Do not expect to find in your own case, every thing you have heard or read of, in the experience of others. In the work of grace there is substantial uniformity, and circumstantial variety. Especially, remember that religion is not a principle of such self-preserving energy, as that when once planted in the soul, it will continue to thrive and increase without effort—but, on the contrary, is of so tender and delicate a nature as to require great, constant, and persevering anxiety, watchfulness, and care.

Do not expect to be made happy by religion unless you become eminent Christians They who would enjoy their profession must drink deep of the wells of salvation. A lukewarm, half-hearted Christian, enjoys neither the world nor religion.

Do not make the average piety of professors the model or standard of your own; but look to the standard set up in the word of God. Consider not what professors are, but what they should be. Many are deceiving themselves, and if you copy them in their delusion, you will follow them in their ruin. This being satisfied to be as others are, has had a more disastrous influence on the church and the world than all other causes put together.

Remember that your evidence of religion ceases when any thing else has the first place in your thoughts and affections.

Never suffer any day to pass without reading a portion of Holy Scripture; and be jealous of every book that becomes a rival with the Bible.

Acquire and maintain great tenderness of conscience, and recollect that there are no *little* sins for a professor.

Begin your Christian course with habits of usefulness. A constant desire and aim to do good as instruments of saving sinners, and raising the stand-

ard of piety and benevolent activity in our fellow Christians, is one of the ends of our conversion, and a convincing proof of its reality.

Do not neglect religious duty, because you suppose your feelings are not right at the time. Action begets emotion: and the right feeling comes with the right doing.

In the great work of mortification do not despond and give up the work, although often defeated in the attempt to conquer and eradicate a corruption. It *must* be conquered; it *may* be by divine grace assisting your endeavours; and it *will* be, if you are resolute, and persevering.

Recollect, you as much need supporting and preserving grace, as you did converting grace. Regeneration supplies no stock which makes you independent of God. "If we *live* in the Spirit, let us also *walk* in the Spirit."—Gal. v. 25. "We must know what is the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe." Our every action as believers, must be performed in the dependance and confidence of faith.*

Do you need ENCOURAGEMENT? Are you alarmed at the difficulties and dangers of the way? Does your heart faint to think how many have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience? Consider you enjoy the sympathies and prayers of the whole church—the watchfulness and care of the pastor—and what is of far more value and consolation, the notice, the love, intercession, and the support of the Great and Good Shepherd, who gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom. *He* will not forget the *lambs:* their feeble bleat at-

* I recommend an admirable little pocket Tract, entitled "Directions for Persons just entering on a Religious Life;" price 2d. Published by Ward & Co.

tracts his notice, their helplessness draws his attention, and for *them* he puts forth all his pastoral kindness and skill. Consider also, that when Jesus Christ begins a good work he will carry it on to perfection. You have all the infinite resources of the Holy Spirit to depend upon, and to draw from. Exceeding great and precious promises, which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, are continually speaking encouragement to you from God. And behold in the church around you, professors gray in the service of the Lord, who were once young and trembling as you now are, but who have been kept through all the duties, the difficulties, and the temptations of perhaps forty or fifty years;—and if you look into the unseen world, *there* are millions round the throne, who have been kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. The faithful love, and all-sufficient grace which have kept *them* can, and will keep you. With these considerations "go on your way rejoicing."*

* Many of the particulars summarily expressed in this chapter will be amplified in the subsequent parts of the book.

CHAPTER V.

AN ATTEMPT TO COMPARE THE PRESENT GENERATION OF PROFESSORS WITH OTHERS THAT HAVE PRECEDED THEM.

"SAY not thou," says the wise man, "what is the cause that the former days were better than these, for thou dost not wisely inquire concerning this."—Eccles. vii. 10. This language could not have intended such comparisons as are cautiously made for the sake of promoting improvement, but only such as are peevishly instituted to cherish discontent, and to justify misanthropy. It has been common for good men of every age to complain of the degeneracy of their times, both as regards the world and the church. "Had it all along been true, it is impossible to conceive, bad as the world is, how much worse it must have been. The truth is we are on many accounts exceedingly incompetent judges.—There is much difficulty in taking a comparative view that shall be sufficiently comprehensive and impartial of our own and other times. We are extremely apt to confine our estimate to particular descriptions of character and deportments of conduct, which happen, whether from accidental circumstances, or from our peculiar mental temperament, to have more particularly attracted our attention and impressed our minds, and to overlook the endless variety of modifications and aspects under which

the corruption of our nature displays itself; to forget that in human society, there is a fashion in morality, as there is in every thing else, of which it is the very essence to fluctuate and to show in successive periods capricious and changeful predilections; that religion and virtue, though declining in the quarter of the country which forms the immediate sphere of our observation, may be reviving and and making progress in another; that when the prevalence of any particular vice has been the occasion of suffering to ourselves, we naturally feel and speak strongly under the irritation of self-love, magnifying to our imagination, both the intrinsic enormity of the evil and the extent to which it is practised. So much do these and other causes affect the judgment, that two persons, differing in circumstances and in mental constitution and moral sentiment, shall produce from the very same scene of life and manners, descriptions so unlike each other, as that we shall be at a loss to believe the identity of the subject; just as two painters, following each his own taste and fancy, may, from the same assortment of objects, by variety of grouping and arrangements, by the different degrees of retirement or of prominence given to each, and by their opposite styles of colouring and shadowing, present us with two pictures so totally dissimilar, as that we may look long and narrowly ere we discover the points of coincidence."*

These remarks so true and so wise, should impose caution on any one who attempts to institute a comparison between his own generation of professors, and those that have gone before. But still most ages have *some* features so broad, and so deeply

* Dr. Wardlaw on Eccles. vol. 1, page 345.

marked, that any man with even moderate sagacity and impartiality, may venture to pronounce upon them. In speaking FIRST of the EXCELLENCIES of the present race of professors as compared with some that have preceded it, I may venture to mention as no unimportant or undistinguished one, *a more marked and decided tone of religious sentiment; a more public and explicit avowal of evangelical doctrine.* I do not mean merely a belief in the doctrine of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, and the great fundamental truth of the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ; but in connection with these, the all-important doctrines of justification by faith alone, and the regeneration of the heart by the Holy Spirit. These are now not only held by the great body of orthodox Dissenters, and Wesleyan Methodists, but by a large proportion of the clergy of the church of England; and are put forward without hesitation or reserve, in bold and striking relief in their preaching. From the Restoration till within the past twenty years, these glorious and fundamental truths lay enshrined in most churches in the prayer-books of the Establishment; but they have now obtained a resurrection from the desk, and an ascension into the pulpit, from whence they are exhibited and preached with divine success. A life-giving system of doctrine has taken the place of a dead theology and a cold morality: and the sentiments of Wickliffe, Cranmer, Hooper, and Ridley, are again heard in the scenes which formerly resounded with their voices. As to the Dissenters, a clear bright effulgence of the truth has broken forth from that cloudy divinity, which at one time too extensively prevailed, and seemed rather intended to conceal, than to reveal the Sun of Righteousness. It must be admitted that a century ago there was a vagueness of senti-

ent among many of the non-conformist ministers; vangelical doctrines were merged in devotional eling; the trumpet gave an uncertain sound from number of their pulpits; and many of the people new neither their own opinions nor those of their astors on the person of Christ, or the work of the pirit. Arianism or Sabellianism threw a dark cold hadow over many of our churches, in which piety rooped and zeal lived not at all. But the age of difference and latitudinarianism is past: a zeal for e truth as it is in Jesus has sprung up; vague eological generalities have given place to definite hristian sentiments: no pastor is received, no reacher is heard, no member admitted to our fellow-ip whose orthodoxy is suspected. Confession both f evangelical doctrines and their vital influence pon the heart, is required of all who take the over-ght, or enter into the communion of our churches.

It is delightful also to notice with how much reater clearness and precision the doctrines of race, as they are called, are now put forth from e pulpit and the press, than they were at one time hen enveloped in the clouds of those systems of eology which border so closely on Antimonianism. he writings of Williams, and Fuller, and Scott, nd Wardlaw, have caused the truth to be seen in s own pure bright light, and delivered multitudes om the iron fetters of a hard, cold, and merciless eology.

Our land is vocal with the joyful sound of the reaching of Christ crucified, calling the dense opulation of our cities and great towns, and the in-abitants of our smaller towns and villages to the ross for salvation. The Church, and the Meeting-ouse echo to each other the name that is above very name, and the worshippers of both commingle

with each other, as they pour forth from their respective places of worship, with their souls thrilling with the notes of the same heavenly music of redeeming love.

Nor ought I, while speaking of the pulpit, to omit the press, from which evangelical truth is flowing in the copious streams of its millions of publications. Infidelity, heresy, and irreligion, have not monopolized the glorious art of printing. To say nothing of other Institutions, I mention only the Religious Tract Society, that spiritual armoury for the church of Christ, where the whole *levy-en-masse* may be supplied with the weapons of truth, and are furnished according to their ability, for the conflict with the powers of darkness. Who will deny, that this zeal for the *truth*, clear, defined, evangelical truth, is a heart-reviving feature of the age?

Dr. Owen, after lamenting the decay of vital religion in his day, goes on to say,—"There is yet another consideration rendering the present state of the Christian religion in the world yet more deplorable. The only principle of evangelical obedience, is sacred truth and our faith therein. That alone is the doctrine which is according to godliness, and all acceptable obedience to God is the obedience of faith. Whatever men do, or pretend unto, in a way of duty unto him, whereof the truth of the Gospel is not the spring and measure, which is not guided and animated thereby, it is not what God at present requireth, nor what he will eternally reward. Wherefore, although men may, and multitudes do, under a profession of that truth, live in open rebellion against its power; yet the wounds of religion are not incurable, nor its stains indelible, whilst the proper remedy is owned, and wants only due application. But if this truth itself be corrupted or deserted, if its

most glorious mysteries be abused or despised, and if its most important doctrines be impeached of error and falsehood, if the vain imaginations and carnal reasonings of the serpentine wits of men be substituted in their room, or exalted above them, what hope is there of recovery? The breach will grow like the sea, until there be none to heal it. If the fountains of the waters of the sanctuary be poisoned in their first rising, they will not heal the nations unto whom they come. Where the doctrine of truth is corrupted, the hearts of men will not be changed by it, nor their lives reformed."

This is strictly true. But blessed be God, I do not think that this dark omen is over us. No such portent, as the orb of truth sinking into the clouds of heresy, or the mists of latitudinarianism, now hangs on the horizon of the church of Christ. True, there are some things which if not checked, look with malign aspect on the spiritual brightening prospects of the Church of England. There is no lover of our Lord Jesus Christ, but what must unfeignedly and heartily rejoice in the wondrous revival of pure Christian doctrine within the pale of her communion; and none but what must tremble for the result of the attempt now being made by certain Oxford Professors and Divines, aided by some high church periodicals, to arrest the progress of what may be termed the second Reformation, and to arrest it by reviving, in part, the errors which the first was designed to abolish. But it will not succeed. If it should, then may it be safely affirmed, that the Establishment is destined to die, not by the hand of any of its foes, but by the matricidial violence of its own children. But there is far too much genuine, healthy, and determined Protestantism in the church

of England to warrant any great apprehension of such a result.

Nor is it any considerable abatement from the statement I have made of the prevalence of sound Christian doctrine among the professors of religion in the present day, that the deluded followers of Irving have in some measure multiplied, and astounded the land by their extravagant absurdities. Fanaticism, in some form or other, is always sure to make its appearance, and do its mischief in an ardent and excited age; just as thunder storms gather and explode amidst the fervid heat of summer. The high temperature of religious feeling, when unchecked by sober thought, supplies the elements of such fantastic notions; but they must, in the nature of things, soon spend themselves, and leave the atmosphere calm, and clear, and bright.

Not, however, that I mean to say, that the Christians of our day are much given to the perusal of theological treatises, or are profoundly learned in the science of divinity. Far from it. Nothing but what is strictly orthodox in sentiment will be received, but then they are content with small portions of knowledge, and those must be such as can be obtained without the cost of much time, or the labour of much thinking. There was an era when the church of God thought herself much indebted to those devoted men, who furnished not their own times alone, but all coming ages with such admirable materials for thinking, and such abundant food for meditation, in their incomparable volumes: when private and even unlettered Christians were familiar with octavos and even quartos; when Hall and Reynolds, Owen and Baxter, Howe and Bates, Doddridge and Watts, were the daily companions of the people of God. But who converses with these vene-

rable fathers now? What is the current sacred literature of the pious in this age? Who now thinks of purchasing any thing but magazines and reviews, memoirs, elementary treatises, and compends of truth? How strange it would be to find a serious friend or neighbour late at night studying Edwards on "the Freedom of the Will," Dwight's Theology, or Scott's Essays. If Christians read, it must be something *sound*, and this is a cause of gratitude; but it must be also *short*. Something that is new and moving—something that may be read without much thought. A considerable portion of the religious reading of Christians in the present day is religious intelligence: it lays hold not merely of the imagination, but of the holiest and most philanthropic feelings of the heart: it is happily become abundant in consequence of the operations of our religious institutions; it is cheapened down to the pecuniary resources of almost the poorest individual; and moreover, it supplies the great stimulus which not only sustains but increases benevolent exertion. He that would attempt to stop these sources of information would not only rob myriads of Christians of some of the purest joys they will ever taste this side of heaven, but would cut off the streams of beneficence which flow through the channels of our societies to irrigate the moral deserts of the world. But still we must take care that even this species of reading may not become engrossing. If zeal increase, knowledge should increase with it. An exclusive or prevailing taste for religious news will be followed by some of the lamentable effects which result from the reading of works of fiction. The mind will in both cases be gradually unfitted for deep and patient investigation. A constant and intent application of the mind to exciting facts, will in-

dispose it for the contemplation of principles; and produce an unceasing demand for something new and striking, which will go on increasing the appetite for novelty, till what is old, and plain, and simple, will become utterly tasteless and insipid.

I mention now another excellence by which the professors of the present age are distinguished, and it is indeed a noble one—I mean *that spirit of holy zeal for the propagation of religion, both at home and abroad, which is so general and so active.* The Puritans, and first Non-conformists, it must be admitted, did little in this way, for indeed they had little or no opportunity: the ruthless, bloody, and remorseless spirit of persecution, left them no other way of diffusing Christianity, than by the example of their suffering patience, or by flying before the storm of oppression, and carrying the gospel into the land of their exile. This they neglected not to do, and the gigantic Republic of the United States of America is in great measure the result of their migration; a country destined to share with the fatherland, the honour of converting the world to Christ.

But coming forward half a century in the history of the churches of our own order, we find them when protected by the act of Toleration, drawing the curtains around them, and lying down to slumber upon their newly obtained liberty. More than a century was given to their inglorious repose: more than a century was lost to the world: during which, probably, two thousands of millions of immortal souls went into eternity, unpitied and unsanctified. It is melancholy now to look back, and think of the silence and inactivity which reigned over the Christian world before the present missionary spirit arose. The valley of dry bones spread out before our forefathers, but none went forth to prophesy to

he slain. There were no Sunday schools, no Tract ocieties, no Bible societies, for our own country; nd no Missionary societies for foreign nations, exept such as had little else than the name. The tate of the poor at home, and of heathen nations broad, was almost as well known then as now; here were printing-presses then as there are now, nd also ships, colonies, and commerce—but next kin to nothing was done for the conversion of the orld.

Blessed be the God of love and truth things are ifferent now: he has poured out the beginnings of is grace upon this age, and has awakened and alled his people to the work of evangelizing the orld. They *begin* to understand and to feel that he spirit of Christianity is essentially a proselyting pirit; that to diffuse the gospel is no less a duty han to believe it; and that no man can really fulfil ll his duties as a Christian who does not in some way or other seek to make his neighbours such. Look around on the Christian church. Every denomination has its Missionary Society, and every congregation its missionary organization. Every object on which the eye of benevolence can rest which needs its exertions has its separate and appropriate confederacy of mercy for its relief: so that it is almost difficult to mention a subject of sorrow, ignorance, or wickedness, which is not found in his own special classification, with the provision for relief suited to his peculiar circumstances. Let any one visit our Metropolis in the month of May: that beautiful season of the year, so wisely selected to harmonize the appearances of the world of nature and of grace, when the budding hopes and springing prospects of both are put forth together; let him witness the signs of holy activity which are conspi-

cuous even amidst the teeming population and multitudinous pursuits of that wondrous city; let him read the long list of public meetings occupying a large portion of the whole month; let him sum up the number of societies for diversified objects, all connected with the spread of religion through one channel, and over one part of the world or other; let him count the stations occupied, and the agents employed; let him compute the money collected, and hear the reports read—and then let him say if God has not granted in his sovereign mercy, one rich and glorious distinction to the professors of the age in which he lives.

In support of all these Institutions, think of the money, the time, the gratuitous labour, and the influence that are bestowed; and think also of the *increasing* spirit of liberality going through our churches; the poor give now what the rich gave formerly, and some of the rich give in a year what their wealthy ancestors scarcely contributed in a whole life. The single guinea is multiplied into tens, and into hundreds. There is a continual expansion of the heart going on, which is preparing for the time when "holiness to the Lord shall be written on the merchandise of Tyre and the bells of the horses." Sums are contributed which would astonish those who have gone to their rest, if they could visit earth again. And when *money* cannot be given in this proportion, how many are giving their time, and for that purpose taking it from domestic enjoyment, literary leisure, innocent recreation, and necessary repose. Persons of all ranks, and all ages, and both sexes, are engaged. Evangelization is the cry of the day, the watchword of the age: so that the person who gives nothing, and does nothing, is charged with deficient, and suspected of questionable *piety*.

Not that we have yet reached the height of our duty, and are doing all we *ought* to do: far, very far from it. We are vastly below our obligations. Those that come after us, will smile at our notions of liberality, and our grand-children will be ready to question whether we rightly understood the meaning of the term. What we are beginning, they will carry on and improve. Ours is but the spring, which by the time it reaches them, will have swollen into a stream; but still through God's grace, we are doing something and must do more. The tradesman must give a larger share of his profits, and the rich man dip far deeper into his purse. There must be a prevailing willingness to practice self-denial, and to make sacrifices for the cause of Christ. We are yet immeasurably bel w our principles and professions in what we do for the conversion of men's souls. If we really believe that the loss of one human soul is a greater catastrophe than the wreck of an empire, or a world, what are we doing to prevent the loss of millions of such souls? Our zeal ought to be and must be more fervent, and it should also become more pure. There is in this day far too much blowing of trumpets; too much display; too much parade and ostentation; too much noise and bustle; too much "come, see my zeal for the Lord;" too much individual and congregational vanity; and too much forbidden incense and strange fire in the censers of those who minister at the altar. This is to be regretted as well as acknowledged; and should be *amended* as well as acknowledged. God will not give the full measure of his blessing till we serve him in a better spirit, with deeper humility, and a more devout mind.

But still, the spirit of the age is an active and a liberal one. The great principle begins to be reor-

ganized, that every church is, or ought to be, a
and foreign missionary society in itself, and
member of every church, in one way or other,
sionary. It begins to be felt that each Chri
put in trust with the gospel for the benefit
world, and that he is an unfaithful trustee, a
his trust, and incurring a dreadful responsibilit
does nothing to spread Christianity in the wo
look upon this spirit as the morning star of t
lennial day; it is a revival of primitive Chris
and will not fail to bring up the latter day glo
is of more consequence than all the organiza
religious zeal, all the noble institutions of th
for if these were all by any means destroyed
row, it would cause them all to be rebuilt on a
and an improved scale. The spirit is abroad
is to lead all nations into the fold of Christ; an
making every deduction from the zeal of the
day which is demanded on account of impure
there must be a vast mass of genuine piety
istence, to draw forth so much liberality an
for extending the kingdom of Christ. Th
been nothing like it since the days of the a
God has shed upon us some of his choicest g
richest honours; may we not be insensible
high distinction.

What renders this missionary spirit the n
markable in itself, and the more to be relied
a token for good, and a proof of its heavenly
is the extraordinary circumstances of the age
which it has carried on its operations. It com
amidst the throes and convulsions of natio
were caused by the French revolution, and se
its first messages of peace and good will to the
when the hearts of the people had scarcely
to palpitate with the enormities of the reign o

Who, at such a time, could think of the miseries of distant countries, when they were trembling for the existence of their own? Yet at such a time, amidst the dread of invasion from abroad, and the fear of intestine commotion at home, a society was formed for the conversion of the world. During all our national struggles with the Gallican conqueror, it held on its noble career as little diverted from its course as the angel flying through the midst of heaven with the everlasting gospel for all nations, might be supposed to be by the noise of the winds, or the tumults of the ocean. It neither paused in war, nor relaxed in peace, nor lost its power to interest the public mind, amidst the greatest political excitement which ever agita'ed the nations of Europe. The poor Pagan living in sin, and dying in despair, was never forgotten, when kings were tumbling from their thrones, and crowns were rolling in the dust. National bankruptcy has threatened us, but still amidst the crash of falling banks and houses of commerce, no one ever dreamed of stopping the supplies necessary for missionary operations. Such a thought never entered the mind of our directors, as suspending our zeal till the storm had blown over. And now what is the aspect of the times? Was the contest of parties ever more fierce? Was the fever of excitement ever higher? Was there ever a time when so much animosity, ill-will, and engrossing party spirit were in operation? And what has become of the missionary cause? There, there it is; floating like the ark over the depths of the deluge, safe and calm amidst the uproar of the elements, piloted by heaven, and bearing the destiny of earth. O what a spectacle does the kingdom at the present moment present, of glory on one hand, and disgrace on the other: all parties wrangling with each other, yet all struggling

for the conversion of the world: retiring from the scenes of their common warfare, to pursue each in his private sphere the works of charity and peace. It was a glorious scene at one of the May meetings in the metropolis, when, upon the resignation of a popular ministry, the country was at the highest pitch of political enthusiasm, and the beam of our national destiny was trembling in the balance, to see with what abstraction of mind and unabated zeal the different societies went to their labour of love; and to behold how the evangelists of the world pursued their work, amidst events which almost paralyzed trade. And at this present moment, not a single missionary society is neglected, nor does any one party relax its missionary ardour for the sake of pursuing with greater single-mindedness any sectarian object. Nothing diverts the attention of the friends of missions from their object, nor damps their zeal, nor diminishes their liberality. The gospel is spreading abroad, while the friends of it are withdrawing from each other at home. Does it not look therefore as if God had indeed called us and keeps us to our work of converting the world, and bound us to it by a tie which nothing shall break? And what a delightful thing is it to think of, that though we are breaking from each other, we cannot break away from helping a perishing world. Is not this a token for good, a bright omen shedding a lustre upon many dark signs.

SECONDLY. I now go on to point out our *defects and blemishes*, and show wherein we come short of others that have gone before us.

1. Professors are in danger, and in too many instances fall into it, of neglecting those parts of religion which are strictly personal, and *substituting a social for an individual piety*. Religion, in the first

d most important view of it, is essentially a per-
nal and individual concern. It is an affair between
od and a man's own soul. Each person has to
ansact with Jehovah through Christ for himself. In
e midst of the church, and as a member of it, he is
ill dealt with by God apart and alone. He has in-
vidual *privileges*. He is singly as much the ob-
ct of the divine love of the Father, the purchase
the Son's blood, and the communication of the
pirit's influence, as if the whole scheme of redemp-
on were contrived and executed for *him*. He may,
ithout hesitation or presumption, say, "God is *my*
od; Christ is *my* Saviour; the Spirit is *my* Sanc-
fier; *mine* is the covenant of grace, with all its
ried, rich, eternal blessings; mine the promises of
e word: heaven, glory, immortality are all *mine*."
es! it is with each Christian in the world of
race as it is with each man in the world of nature;
e latter has the whole effulgence of the sun pour-
g upon him, as much so as if there was not another
e but his to behold the splendour; and the former
s the whole plenitude of divine grace descending
on his soul as truly as if there were no others that
eded or shared it. Blessed thought! he has indi-
dual consequence, and does not derive it all merely
om his association with the church. But then he
s individual *duties*, as well as privileges. The
ole and entire obligations of the moral law; of
e rule of Christian love; of the duty of mortifica-
n of sin, rest upon *him;* he is to believe, to hope,
love, to pray for, and by *himself*. He has his
n soul to be saved; his own heart to be renewed
d sanctified; his own temper to be rendered meek,
ntle, and benevolent; and nothing can release him
m the obligations to do all this, no, not even the
st assiduous attention to the welfare of others;

for zeal cannot be a substitute for piety. The at tendance at the committee-room cannot be an excus for neglecting the closet; and the support of a societ can be no apology for neglecting to mortify a co ruption. Yet there is a tendency in this day to fo get this. It is a day of association and organizatio men act much with others, and there is an immine danger of losing sight of religion as a personal, pr vate, and individual concern. We are too mu drawn away from our closets and ourselves. O eye is taken off from our own hearts and divert to others; we lose the habit of silent meditation that of discussion; we have become inapt for se conference; we are so accustomed to exciteme that there is a dullness in solitude; we are so we to lean upon others, that our piety seems scarce able to walk or stand alone. We find it difficult detach ourselves from our fellows, and make o selves the first and separate object of our solicitu and to carry on what belongs to us in an isolat state. Private prayer is neglected for that which social; the Bible for the sermon; and the closet the committee-room. The great system of reveal truth is not sufficiently brought before us in its gre deur, glory, and demands, as a matter for our indi dual contemplation, reception, and application. T is one defect.

2. Another, and which is akin to it, is *a want that high-toned piety and deep devotional feeli* which characterized the Christians of some p ages. This remark will apply to the professors all denominations. The life of faith, and hope, a prayer, is too low with them all. Engrossed much by trade, politics, and social entertainme with the exception of a little time redeemed for public institutions of the day, they have scarc

leisure for the exercises of the closet, and the communings with God in which those who have before us indulged. Thus the diaries, memoirs, ıneral sermons, which have been handed down from past times, seem to indicate, that if we l in diffusing religion, our ancestors did in ex- ifying it: and that if we are above them in ac- zeal, they were our superiors in serious, humble spiritual piety. "The increasing demand of reat Christian public," says Dr. Humphrey, of rica, "is for *excitement*—for something that will uce strong feeling, and gratify an over-craving sity. Like the Athenians, and the strangers h were there, how many would apparently be to spend their time in nothing else but either to or hear *something new*. Hence the religious pation of large towns—the eagerness of inquiry new preachers, and the running from one place orship to another, for the mere gratification of a curiosity. Hence the growing aversion of any didactic and argumentative in the pulpit, and ncreasing demand for what are called *popular* urses, so that unless the preacher make some g appeals to the sympathies and passions of his ers; unless he take them out into the grave- , or carries them to the abode of recent widow- , and supperless orphanage; or transports them ggernaut or the Ganges; he is dry and heart- or plodding and metaphysical, and, of course, ely to be tolerated. To sit, as our fathers of ast century used to do, Sabbath after Sabbath, r sound doctrinal discussion, and to see the hour- s turned before the improvement of the sermon, could endure it?" The excitement of the pas- , rather than the elevation of the soul to God and ultivation of the heart, seems to be the religion

of a great many of the present day. Of the crowded and deeply affected audiences that hang in breathless silence upon the popular preachers in the church, the chapel, and the meeting-house, and fancy themselves so powerfully impressed by the discourses of their favourite minister, how few, comparatively, are found spending their hours in the closet, plying the work of mortification of sin, promoting the spirit of charity, communing with God, and rising on the wings of faith and hope to the contemplation of eternity. My opinion, then, is, that the number of *real* Christians is greatly increased, but that in general they are not eminent ones, so far as relates to the higher class of devotional and personal excellences. Religion is spread over a wider surface, but in these things it has lost in depth what it has gained in breadth; it is the religion of activity rather than of meditation; of the imagination rather than the heart; of the place of public resort rather than the retirement of the closet; and with the bustling spirit of proselytism, does not blend enough of the deep conviction, elevated devotion, and patient self-denial of martyrdom.

3. Perhaps *a want of conscientiousness* may be charged upon many of the professors of the present day. I occupy no narrow sphere of observation, and am acquainted, either personally or by report, with many Christians of various denominations, and I am compelled to believe that there is among them all a sad deficiency of that exquisite tenderness of conscience, which is the most unequivocal sign and expression of eminent piety. Bright and illustrious examples, I allow, there are in every section of the church, at *this* day, and not a few of them either, of Christians watchful and jealous over themselves, even unto trembling, lest they should sin against God or

man; sensitive even to painfulness on the subject of transgression; and whose whole life is a holy mixture of vigilance, penitence, and prayer. But, ah! how many are there of an opposite character, whose conscience, though sufficiently alive to the *greater* acts of transgression, has neither vision to discern the criminality of little sins, nor susceptibility to feel them. Where are the men who, by the indulgence of a single feeling contrary to purity or love, or the utterance of a single word opposed to truth or kindness, or the performance of a single act, which in the smallest degree infringes the law of justice, honour, or mercy, would feel an instant wound in the spirit, which nothing could mollify or heal but a fresh exercise of repentance and faith?—the men who have placed their consciences in the light of revelation, and who live both in reference to small things and great, in habitual reverence of this faithful monitor and awful judge? There are *some* such, but they are too few in any division of the Christian church in this day. This want of conscientiousness is strikingly apparent in the mode of conducting the affairs of business. This, however, will be enlarged upon in a subsequent part of the volume, as will also—

4. Conformity to the world, which is now one of the sins of God's professing people.

5. There is probably scarcely any deficiency of the church in the present day, as compared with preceding generations, more apparent than the *neglect of domestic religion.* This, I believe, is generally admitted, and not without reason. In addition to the devout and regular performance of family prayer, night and morning, the evenings of the Sabbath were by our forefathers a consecrated season for the catechetical instruction of the children. The father, with patriarchal grace, acted as the prophet as well

as the priest and king of his household; and as a consequence naturally to be looked for, the churches were principally replenished from the families of the righteous. Is it so now? Are the communicants at the Lord's table, either in the Church of England, among the Methodists, or the Dissenters, chiefly composed of "the children of the kingdom?" How is this, but from a relaxation of domestic religion? Family prayer, though in few families omitted, is not performed with that constancy, solemnity, and fervour, which is calculated to interest and to edify; parental authority is not maintained with that steadiness which is adapted to inspire respect, and that affection which is likely to secure obedience; and as to the judicious, diligent, and engaging communication of religious instruction, which is necessary as well to inform the mind, to enlighten the conscience, and to form the character, it is in some families almost entirely neglected. I bring no false accusation, when I affirm that in many houses, both among Episcopalians and Dissenters, the heads of which stand high among the professors of the day, family religion is but the form of godliness without its power. On the other hand, it is my happiness to have been the delighted witness, and that in many cases too, of the blessed and holy results of a good system of domestic religious instruction. But it cannot be said that this generally prevails in the religious world. Far more solicitude is felt, and far more pains are taken by many, to educate their children for this world than for the next, and to fit them to act their part well for time, than to prepare them for the scenes of eternity. *Catechetical instruction*, I lament to think, has fallen too much into desuetude, and has gone out of fashion with many. True, it is, that a judicious and well-informed parent can dis-

pense with such helps, and leading his children at once to behold the wide expanse of religious truth, as it spreads out in boundless grandeur in the Bible, can point out the separate beauties and harmonious scenes of the whole prospect. But this is not the case with all. They need something more than the scriptures, and can do little except in the way of catechism. Besides, it is a question, whether the adoption of both plans is not, when *both* are well conducted, the most perfect method of conveying religious truth to the minds of the young. A catechetical answer, if well drawn, not only helps the memory of the learner, but aids his understanding too; it is the rays of many separate passages of scripture converging at a point, which reflects back its light upon the very source whence it is derived. It is the abuse of these helps, not their use, that is to be discouraged. Our generation is rich in advantages of another kind—I mean those numerous interrogatory exercises upon the scriptures which have been published for the instruction of the young, and which leave the present generation of parents still more inexcusable if they neglect the religious education of their children.* It is to be recollected, however, that the communication of knowledge is only *one part* of a religious education. The head may be attended to, while the heart is neglected; and it is the obvious tendency of this age to carry on the one far in advance of the other. It is the mistake of the people of the world in the business of general education, to attach more importance to literature and physical science than to virtue; and no less the mistake of

* Of the numerous works of this kind that have come under my notice, I have seen none superior to that of Mrs. Henderson, which I very cordially recommend both for the use of families and Bible classes.

pious people in their systems of religious education, to be more earnest in communicating scriptural knowledge, than in forming the religious character. Here then is the defect to be supplied, a want of deep anxiety, and judicious, persevering, and prayerful effort to train up our children in the way they should go, and to prepare them to become members first of the church on earth, and then of the church in heaven.

6. The last thing I shall mention as an inferiority of the present generation of professors to their ancestors, is a *certain kind of fickleness in their religious profession*, a want of fixedness, and gravity in their Christian habits. Often hastily assumed, it is o course lightly held, and easily changed or modified It is painful to observe what very trivial causes in some instances, will induce an alteration in their whole conduct, and lead some to break their religious connexions, to retire from the place where their fathers worshipped God, and forsake the minister who had been blessed to their conversion. Nor does the instability stop here, for they can shift themselves from one denomination to another with as much ease as they can their cushions and their books from one chapel to another. Continual migrations are going on from the Church of England to Dissenters, and from the Dissenters back to the church; and between the different denominations and congregations of nonconformists. Where this is really the result of conviction, it must be approved and not condemned; for no man should consider his religious sentiments merely in the light of an hereditary possession, but as a matter of intelligent and conscientious preference; it is beneath the dignity of a man, much more the profession of a Christian, to have no other reason for our belief, than that it was held by our fathers

before us. But how many cases are there in which persons are neither held by hereditary prejudice, nor moved by an enlightened conscience, but actuated solely by pique, fashion, or convenience. Some are carried about by the shifting tides and variable winds of political opinion and party spirit, others by genteel associations, and more still by the impulses of imagination and taste. It is the loud and bitter lament of a splendid but papistical writer in the Quarterly Review, that a large portion of the members of the Church of England have lost much of their veneration for, and attachment to, *the Church*, as such, and are moved and influenced only by the weaker, and more variable affection for her formularies and her ministers; and are consequently sunk down from the feelings of high churchmen, to a level approaching that of dissent. Woful apostacy! Sad degeneracy! Perhaps, however, there may be found in all denominations too great a predominance of taste and feeling over judgment and conscience in matters of religion, though not as in this case, a diminished reverence for *the Church* as an ecclesiastical abstraction. Observe the influence which one popular preacher has in large towns and cities over the members of his own denomination, whether it be the Establishment or the Dissenters. This fresh wonder, like the new moon, sets the whole ocean in movement, by the attraction of his genius, always causing a high tide to follow upon his appearance, and leaving the opposite shores proportionably deserted. Old and tried clergymen and pastors are forsaken for this youth of much rhetoric and a fine voice; and that not by young females only, but by those whom the veteran minister had been the instrument of converting from the error of their ways, and in labouring for whose spiritual edification he had brought on himself the in-

creasing infirmities of a premature old age. It does indeed appear to me and has to others, that religion has lost something of its steadiness, its seriousness, and its dignity, and has acquired too much of the flutter and the vanity of a thing of fashion and excitement. I do not want the chain of caste to bind men to their hereditary opinions, nor family prejudice to make them ecclesiastical fixtures in the place of their fathers, nor the gloom of superstition to invest them with the air and mien of spectral forms—but a profession of religion is the most solemn, though most joyful thing on earth, and ought to be sustained in all its exercises and habits, with an appropriate seriousness, dignity, and conscientiousness.

Such, then, is my own estimate of the state of professors in the present day. I have been anxious neither to charge them with faults of which they are not guilty, nor to extenuate such as truly belong to them: nor on the other hand to deny or to flatter their excellencies. I see many things to lament, and most of all the bitter animosity which exists between the two great bodies of Protestants in this kingdom, or at any rate in one of them towards the other; but I see much to inspire me with gratitude for the present, and hope for the future. I am not one of those who in the signs of the times see nothing but portents, and in the voices of passing events hear nothing but denunciations. Our position is that of nature in early spring, when there may be far more of cold wind, and biting frost, and drifting snow, than there was during many of the hybernal days; but withal, these signs of lingering winter are blended with symptoms of approaching summer. I have pointed out what is wrong with the hope of helping to set it right, and I have adverted to what is good with the design of making it better. I have not uttered the language

of querulousness and discontent; for I feel there is no occasion for them. No age that has yet existed makes me regret that I was born in that which is now passing over us. I believe the world is not only growing older, but wiser and better; and that Christ's body, the church, is increasing not only in bulk, but in vigour. Many evils exist, but they will be, I hope, removed or subdued, by the Spirit of God accompanying his truth. Nothing will be permitted to hinder the advance of Christ's kingdom. "Though," says South, "there be a lion, a bull, a venomous serpent, and a fiery scorpion in the Zodiac, yet still the sun holds on his way, goes through them all, brings the year about, [covers the fields with verdure, the trees with fruit, and the earth with yellow harvests,] finishes his course, shines and is glorious in spite of such opposition." So will it be with the orb of the moral world.

Still, however, as the record of the past is preserved for the improvement of the present, and the memorial of the present is to be kept for the benefit of what is now the future, if in looking back we find virtues in our ancestors which we have not, or which we possess in less degrees, let us add their excellences to our own; and if they are seen to possess faults which we find not in ourselves, let us be thankful for, though not proud of our superiority. If they excelled us in the devotional, and spiritual, and conscientious, and we excel them in the active, the liberal, and the diffusive; let it be our business instead of endeavouring to settle which is the *more* excellent way, to unite them both, which is unquestionably the *most* excellent. Let us feed the lamp of zeal which we are holding up amidst a dark world, with the oil of piety. Let the light of truth shine forth from a heart burning with the fire of

holy love. In the beautiful pyramid of Christian graces, which the Apostle has raised, he laid the foundation in faith, and placed charity at the apex, as if to remind us that the personal virtues must support the relative ones. As the priests of the Levitical economy, hallowed *themselves* for the work of the Lord in the temple, so must the Christian priesthood, the professors of Christ, sanctify themselves, not by animal sacrifices and ablutions of water to the purifying of the flesh, but by renewed faith in the Lamb of God, and the new baptism of the Holy Ghost, for the greater work, to which God in his providence has called *them* in the conversion of the world. We must separate ourselves from the love of the world, to this stupendous achievement, this high and holy service, by more of the life of faith, the power of prayer, and the self-denial of true godliness. A dispensation connected intimately with the scheme of redemption, the moral destinies of the world, and the glories of eternity, is come upon us, and committed to us, and it is to be feared we are not ready for it. We are going forth to our vocation, but it is rather in the feebleness than the fulness of our strength. Never, O never, may we forget that religious societies, however well supplied with funds, are to us but as the hands and the arms of Sampson were to that wondrous man when he did his mighty deeds; but that it is piety, humble, fervent, spiritual, believing, praying piety, that is as the lock of his strength, which enabled him in the name of God to triumph even in death, over Dagon and his idolatrous worshippers.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NECESSITY AND IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSORS NOT BEING SATISFIED WITH LOW DEGREES OF PIETY, AND OF THEIR SEEKING TO ATTAIN TO EMINENCE.

It is obvious, both from the nature of religion and the metaphors employed in the word of God to describe it, that it may exist in various degrees, just as life may be found in all stages from the feebleness of approaching death, to the full vigour of glowing health: from the sickly infant, to the vigorous adult. So it is in religion, there may be the bud and the fruit; the dawn and the decline of day; the glimmering spark, and the full blaze. All true Christians are really converted, but all are not equally sanctified. There is an essential difference of nature between the least eminent Christian and the most excellent worldling, but it is not always perceptible to us. My object in this chapter, is to excite the ambition of professors to seek after high attainments in piety. The present race of Christians can scarcely be considered eminent ones in some things. This has already been touched upon in a previous chapter. Politics and trade have an unhappy tendency to lower the tone of spiritual piety, and even the spirit of enterprise in benevolent and religious institutions, may, without care, call off our attention too much

from our own personal religion. The dew of divine grace, and the fine odours of devotional feeling may exhale from the soul, by the warmth of a bustling zeal, as well as by the ardour of secular pursuits, and the fervour of party politics.

Perhaps it may be well to state, what is meant by eminent piety. Real personal godliness consists of the union of scriptural opinions—spiritual affections—a tender conscience—good morals—and Christian love: eminent piety, therefore, means all these same elements united and carried on to a high degree.

A great regard for, and relish of, evangelical sentiment is necessary: a discriminating mind that attaches much importance to right opinions, in opposition to that spurious candour and destructive latitudinarianism which thinks it of little consequence what a man believes, provided he acts well.

With this must be associated a *large measure of spiritual affections*, or what in common discourse is called spirituality of mind; a great and prevailing taste for divine and heavenly things; a walking with God; living by faith; setting our affections on things above; being dead to the world; a proneness to devout meditation; a delight in prayer; a fondness for the Scriptures; a disposition to retire from company to hold communion with God; an ardent love to religious ordinances; an enjoyment of the peace that passeth understanding, and a frequent experience of the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. *This* is eminent religion.

It must contain much *laborious and painful mortification of sin in the heart.* The New Testament every where supposes the indwelling of sin in believers, and every where enjoins its mortification. There is "still a law in our members warring against the law of our mind, seeking to bring us into

aptivity to the law of sin which is in our members." The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit gainst the flesh; and these are contrary the one to he other, so that we cannot do the things that we would." Hence, we are called upon "to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof; to mortify the deeds of the body;" "to strive against sin;" "to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." He is, therefore, most eminent in religion who is most engaged to the work of mortification of sin; who deals with his heart as a most neat and cleanly woman deals with her house, not enduring that one filthy room or one unclean spot should be found in it. This struggle after *universal* holiness, *inward* holiness, *perfect* holiness, *this* is eminent religion: a desire and endeavour after purity of heart; a real and vigorous pursuit after absolute perfection.

It includes, also, an *exquisite tenderness of conscience;* a mind that trembles at sin; and shrinks like the apple of the eye from slight offences, as well as greater ones; a holy watchfulness against sins of the tongue, and of the imagination, and of the heart, as well as of the life; a constant penitential frame for our manifold imperfections.

Nor must we omit to mention as essential to eminent piety, *a high-toned morality;* a sense of honour; an inflexible integrity, not to be seduced by the greatest temptations, and most flattering prospects.

Liberality for the cause of Christ proportioned to our circumstances, is also necessary to exalted religion; a mind so penetrated and filled with a sense of God's love in Christ Jesus to us, as shall make us willing to give freely to the cause of God, of that property which he has first given to us.

Nor is the description complete without mention-

ing *a large portion of that charity* which the apostle so beautifully describes in the 13th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. The spirit of love must be in us, or there is *no* religion; there must be much of this spirit, or there cannot be *eminent* religion. *This, this* is piety. Love is religion, and the man who is greatly wanting in this, let him have what else he may, is low in personal godliness.

Connected with all this must be *the prevalence of evangelical motive;* a constant impulse supplied to the soul from the belief and sense of the love of Christ. The moral excellence of Christianity is not an abstract system of ethics, a mere sense of propriety leading to a cold, heartless, though still well formed character; it is a constant movement of the heart in the splendour and attraction of the cross of Christ. "*The love of Christ constraineth us,*" is the spring and reason of all Christian piety. *He* is eminent in religion in whose heart Christ dwells by faith; who is rooted and grounded in love; who knows the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and to whom this divine love is as the warmth of its spiritual life, the pulsation of the heart, the source of healthful action; who loves his wife, as and because Christ loved *him;* who forgives his enemy, because Christ forgave *him;* who is benevolent to others, because Christ was full of grace to *him;* who lives in all holiness, because Christ died for this purpose in reference to *him;* this is eminent piety, to be always in sight of the cross, having fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and being made conformable unto his death; so that we shall truly comprehend the meaning and feel the force of the Apostle's words, "FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST."

The union of *all* these constitutes eminent religion. It is not a great prominence of any one of them, to

the neglect of others; but the combination in tolerably equal proportions of these varied excellencies. Symmetry means beauty; and symmetry means the union of many good features or parts in due proportions. *One* good feature, though of surpassing loveliness, if combined with others, that are as much below mediocrity, as this is above it, will not make a beautiful or interesting countenance. One striking excellence if associated with defects and deformities, instead of throwing them back into shadow, serves only to render them more conspicuous and more offensive, by the power of contrast. This applies strictly to religion. A man, though seemingly eminent for spirituality, yet if low in morality; or if deficient in liberality, yet lukewarm in spiritual affection; or if very upright, and also devotional, yet of known bad temper, cannot be eminent in religion.

Great and lamentable errors on this subject have prevailed in the Christian world, and it is necessary that they should be rectified. It has been too commonly supposed, that spirituality alone, apart from the other things mentioned, constitutes a high degree of religion; and hence many have passed for eminent Christians simply on the ground of fervid feeling, although perhaps lamentably deficient, in tenderness of conscience, a sense of honour, or Christian charity. It is the symmetrical union of all the varieties of Christian excellence, that forms moral beauty; the association of high devotion with justice and truth; the character that ascends the mount to commune with God, and then comes down to reflect the light of the excellent glory upon man in moral virtue; the blending of the dispositions that prepare us for heaven, with those that fit us to adorn our stations and bless our species upon earth. The Apostle in speaking of the church says, "From whom the whole body fitly

joined together and compacted with that which every part supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part. maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."—Eph. iv 16. As far as it can, this may be applied to individual personal religion. We must not pay attention to one part, and endeavour to carry that to perfection, to the neglect of the rest, but seek eminence in all. If it were lawful to make comparisons on such a subject, we should say that mediocrity in all, without the absence of any one part, is better than great attainments in one to the total neglect of several others. But our obvious duty is to seek after perfection both of parts and of degrees.

There seems to be too much of the distribution of the various Christian excellences among many persons, and not enough of the concentration of all of them in each professor. Sometimes we see an individual, generous and public-spirited, but he is perhaps austere and tyrannical at home; or else he is wanting in a nice and delicate sense of honour in his commercial transactions; or his personal religion is lukewarm or defective. Here is a second, he is a partaker of a zealous and enlightened attachment to orthodox sentiment, but he is too covetous, or too much given to unsubdued temper. A third is upright and honourable as a tradesman, a pattern of all that is just, true, honest, lovely and good report, but he is sadly deficient in spirituality of mind and religious affections. A fourth, is spiritual above most, fond of meditation, and much given to prayer, but is at the same time somewhat puffed up with pride, censorious, and sadly wanting in zeal for the spread of Christ's kingdom in the world. Thus, we find, in looking round on the Christian church, that the various excellences and beauties of the New Creature, seem

rather shared by many than possessed by each. True it is that we may conceive it possible that one grace may shine forth in more conspicuous glory in the Christian character than the rest, but still it may be assumed as an indisputable fact, that it is barely possible to have *one* excellence in great and rare perfection, without the rest being in *some measure* in considerable strength also: and much less is it possible to have one towering virtue, associated with many imperfections of equal strength and stature. Eminence in piety, then, signifies, as I have before said, our having all the parts of the Christian character in considerable strength, and in tolerable proportions.

If motives are necessary to urge you to obtain this eminence, how many, and what cogent ones, are at hand: but motives to what? To personal religion? No; you, as professors have, or are supposed to have *that* already: to *eminent* religion; to high degrees of piety; to vigorous, fervent, and exalted devotion? Consider, then, how the subject is enjoined upon you in the word of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, *with all thy heart and soul and strength.*" "Be *zealous* of good works." "Be *filled* with the fruits of righteousness." "What manner of persons ought you to be *in all* holy conversation and godliness." "Be ye *perfect* as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." Astounding idea! To be perfect—not perfect as glorified saints—not as angels—but perfect as God. Oh! this is almost overwhelming; almost enough to throw us into despair!

Eminent piety is the way to happiness. It is joy, and peace, and bliss—the sunshine of the heart, the Sabbath of the soul, the resting-place on which the the heart lays down its load of cares, and anxieties, and sorrows. There is happiness in faith, but it

must be strong faith; happiness in hope, but it must be lively hope; happiness in love, but it must be fervent love. The religion of many professors is useless to them. It does nothing for them. They derive no good from it. They are neither comforted in trouble, grateful in prosperity, nor sustained in anxiety by it. They hear some talk of their joys, and hopes, and seasons of communion with God, but they are strangers to these things: in short, their religion is a mere dead form. In the case of some other professors, their religion is an actual incumbrance, a hinderance to their happiness, rather than a help. They are spoiled for the world, without being fitted for the church. They cannot go to fashionable amusements, and yet they have nothing in the place of them. Their soul dwells in a wilderness, a bleak and cheerless desert, where no pleasant plant grows, not even the deleterious flower of sinful pleasure. The happiness of religion, is reserved for those whose piety is sincere, and the higher degrees of its happiness for such as have large measures of holiness. God is the fountain of life; and in his light only you can see light: you must press nearer to him, if you would enjoy him. His dwelling is in the holy mount, and you must ascend to him there, if you would have joy and peace in believing. You have read the biography of eminent saints, and sometimes have exclaimed in almost an agony, "Why am I a stranger to their delights?" The answer is easy, "Because you are a stranger to that elevated piety from which their joy sprung" The same measure of faith would have been attended in your case, with the same degree of holy joy. You are too worldly, too proud, too irritable, too prone to violate the rule of duty in little things, too careless in your walk; and must therefore grow in grace, before you can increase in religious comfort.

The *continuance* of religion in the soul, is exceedingly precarious if it be not eminent. In many cases, piety is so superficial, feeble, lukewarm, and undecided, that it soon dies away amidst the cares, the comforts, and the pursuits of life. It has not root, strength, or vitality enough, to resist the influence of the calm, much less the shock of the tempest. It is like a taper, that needs not the gust of wind to blow it out, but which expires in still air, for want of oil to keep it burning. We see many and melancholy exemplifications of this. Young females, who in single life seemed to have religion, have lost it all amidst the cares of a family; many a servant, who in his dependent situation, was a consistent, though not an eminent professor, has become a confirmed worldling upon entering into business as his own master; many an individual whose piety was sustained by the aid of quickening and powerful preaching, has relapsed into utter carelessness, when taken away from these refreshing ordinances. In all these instances, religion withered away for want of root. In other cases, it has been destroyed, laid prostrate at once, by a violent attack of temptation, or some sudden change of circumstances. There is, therefore, no safety but in a heart established by grace; a clearness of view, a strength of principle, a deep-rooted conviction, and a peace that passeth understanding keeping the heart and mind in the fear of God. Oh what disclosures would days of persecution make if they were to come again; in such sifting times how many professors who now excite no suspicion of their sincerity, would be blown away as the chaff. We see this in part exemplified now, by the influence of ordinary troubles upon some of these In prosperity they are cheerful, regular, and apparently consistent;

but see them in adversity, what poor, dispirited, despairing creatures they are. Not a ray of comfort reaches their heart; not a smile is on their countenance; every pleasant prospect is vanished, every hope is extinguished, and they are as bleak, desolate, and forlorn, as the veriest worldling on earth in the wreck of his fortune. Would it be thus if there were *eminent* piety?

And who is it that does *honour to religion*, raises its credit and reputation in the estimation of the world? Not he whose piety is so feeble, so fluctuating, and attended by so many imperfections, as to leave it quite doubtful whether he can be truly a religious man. Not he who on being named as a church member excites the astonishment of the by-standers, that *he* should be accounted a Christian. No, the little he has, does more harm than if he had none at all. He had better give up the name, for nothing but that remains, and the very name acquires reproach by being associated with so much that is unworthy of it. Such persons had better abandon their profession altogether, if they are resolved not to improve. It is the eminent Christian, the man whose religion makes him *obviously* holy, happy, and useful; whose piety not only proves its own sincerity, but its own strength; who is decided, consistent, and earnest; this is the man of whom it may be said, "wisdom is justified of her children."

How will your *usefulness be increased* by eminent piety. Pure zeal is the emanation of true godliness, and in proportion to the strength of the latter, will be the fervour of the former. It is the love of Christ constraining us, that will keep us steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Excitement from other causes, impulses from other sources, will subside; it is this, this only, that can supply

a constant spring of activity and liberality. This will give permanency and regularity to our efforts, and will be likely to give success also by bringing down, through the instrumentality of fervent prayer, the blessing of God on all we do.

And then grace and glory are inseparable; grace is glory begun, and glory is grace completed; grace is the seed, glory is the crop, and in proportion to the seed will be certainly the harvest; for what a man soweth that shall he also reap. That there are different degrees of honour and felicity in the heavenly world, is clearly a doctrine of scripture, and it is proposed there as an incentive to seek after high attainments in godliness. Our future happiness or misery, though the former is strictly a gift of grace, and the other an award of justice, will unquestionably spring out of the character we attain to in this world. A very large proportion of both heaven and hell, will consist of something *within* us; will arise from what we are; in one case from perfect holiness, and in the other from absolutely matured sin. There will be, of course, external objects that will contribute to the exercises of these different states of mind, but the states of mind themselves, will be the seat of misery or bliss. Hence then it is evident, we are now continually meetening for one or other of these conditions, and so close is the connexion between grace and glory, that it is probable that not a single act of true piety, not an effort, not a motive, not a feeling, is without its influence upon our eternal state. Every holy desire, volition, word, purpose, and action, is something carried to the formation of the eternal character; just as every little dot of the painter's pencil is something contributed to the completeness of the picture. So, on the contrary, every single sin on earth is an addition to the character and torment of a damned spirit in hell. What a motive, then, is

this consideration to exalted piety, to high degrees of religion. All you acquire in this world, is an accumulation going on for the next. This is laying up treasures in heaven, growing rich towards God, and becoming affluent for eternity. The eminent Christian is preparing for some high post in the kingdom of God, and for a station of double honour in the realms of immortality.

O professors, let me, with all the earnestness of which I am capable, or which I am able to express, exhort and entreat you to seek after higher attainments in piety than you possess. You are living too low, far too low; beneath, much beneath your duty, your privilege, your principles, and your profession. Your religion is too much a religion of mere opinions, and forms, and ceremonies; of mere abstinence from gross immorality, coupled with an attendance upon an evangelical ministry. Where, O where, I ask again, as I have done before, do we see the life of God in the soul, the heavenly mind, the work of faith, the tender conscience, the image of God, the mind of Christ, the impress of eternity? Who have conquered the world by faith? Who have set their affections on things above? Who are making it their great business to prepare for the coming of Christ, and their blessed hope to look for his arrival? Where are the epistles of Christ known and read of all men? Where are the peculiar people? Where the witnesses for God? Where are they to whom we can point and say, "Behold the men and women who look not at things seen and temporal, but at things not seen and eternal?" Awake, arise, shine; listen to the fearful language of Christ to a Christian church of antiquity—"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert either cold or hot. So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and

neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth."—(Rev. iii. 16.) Tremble at this awful denunciation, lest it should come upon you.

Begin, from the perusal of these pages, to seek after higher degrees of personal religion. Be not satisfied with present attainments. Even the apostle Paul resolved to forget the things that were behind, in a desire to press on to greater excellence. And can *you* be satisfied? Beware of making the perilous, yet frequent experiment of ascertaining with how little piety you can reach heaven. They who are seeking just enough religion for this purpose, will find out to their eternal confusion, that they had *not* enough. The love of God, like the love of money, is never satisfied with its possession. Real grace in the soul is ever seeking after increase, and any approach to contentment with what you have is a proof you have none. You *must* grow. It is your solemn duty. God demands it; your happiness and your safety require it. It is as much *your* duty to be eminent Christians, as it is that of others. No reason for this applies to them which does not equally apply to you. A higher degree of holiness is *attainable* by you. The grace that is necessary for this is within your reach. You are not to imagine that there is any peculiarity in your case, which forbids the hope of improvement. God's grace is all-sufficient; the Holy Spirit is omnipotent. You are commanded as matter of duty, invited as matter of privilege, to be eminent in religion. O take up the wish, the purpose, the determination. Make it an object that you *must* accomplish, an attainment you *must* secure. Set about it in earnest. Give yourself to reading, to meditation and prayer. Set apart time, sufficient time for all the purposes of private devotion; for communion with your own heart, and for communion

with God. Resist the encroaching, absorbing *destructive* influence of the world in any form. Consider you have a soul to be saved, a hell to avoid, a heaven to obtain. Your profession cannot do this for you: rely not upon that; feel as if the work were all to be begun; let there be the same earnestness, the same diligence, the same solicitude, as there were when you commenced the pursuit of eternal life. Adopt the Bible afresh as the Book of books: let nothing supplant this precious volume. One great cause why the piety of this age is so feeble and so languid, is because the Bible has in many cases been swept away by a flood of uninspired publications. The pure milk of the word has been neglected, or has been so diluted, as to leave but little nourishment in the mixture; and the new-born babe, as matter of course, has remained dwarfish and sickly. Even the biography of the most distinguished saints, which ought to form a part of the Christian's reading, and is eminently calculated to fan the flame of devotion in the soul, ought not to be allowed to displace the word of God. Again, I say, professors, awake, arise, shine. "To be carnally minded is death; to be spiritually minded is life and peace. If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."—Col. iii. 1—3.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DUTY OF PROFESSORS TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL.

"God hath called us unto holiness."—1 Thes. iv. 7. Impressive idea! It is our very vocation to be holy. Holiness was the image of God in which man was created, against which the envy and malignity of Satan were directed, and which he dashed at and destroyed, when he found himself unable to reach the divine original. Holiness is the end of all God's dispensations towards his people, whether of Providence, of Grace, or of Glory. Holiness will constitute the perfection of man's moral nature in heaven; it is the spotless garment in which the seraph ministers before the throne of the Eternal; it is more, for it is the beauty of the Divine Being himself; not so much a separate attribute of his nature, as the perfection of *all* his attributes. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all;" and from the midst of his excellent glory, he is ever calling to us and saying, "*Be ye holy, as I am holy.*" True religion is conformity to God, and God is holy. Herein is Christianity distinguished from idolatry, and its infinite superiority above the classic paganism of antiquity demonstrated. Some of the philosophers, especially of the Stoic sect, delivere many fine sentiments and even beautiful maxims of a stern and rigid morality, but their ethics had no connexion

with their theology. "The gods of the Pagan heaven were little better than men's own evil qualities exalted to the sky, to be thence reflected back upon them, invested with Olympian charms and splendours. A mighty labour of human depravity to confirm its own dominion! It would translate itself to heaven, and usurp divinity, in order to come down thence with a sanction for man to be wicked." So that while men in Christian lands become wicked for want of religion, those that dwell in heathen countries become wicked *by* religion. The moralist and the priest are in opposition to each other, and the former, if he would succeed in making men better, must caution them against allowing the latter to bring them within the precincts of a temple, or introduce them to the presence of a God. But it is the excellence and glory of Christianity, that its refined morality is founded upon and arises from, its pure theology; which contains every possible motive and every necessary means to holiness. Our great business then in this world is to be made and kept holy. Our whole life is to be one incessant struggle against that moral evil, which is all around us and within us. "*We are called*," I repeat the expression, "*to holiness.*"

How emphatic, how comprehensive, is the apostolic admonition which is the subject of this chapter, "*abstain from all appearance of evil.*"—1 Thess. v. 22. Some expositors render the expression thus, "abstain from *every sort or kind* of evil." In this sense, it is a most important precept. Evils are of various kinds and degrees, and it is a Christian's duty to avoid them all. He must not reconcile himself to any one thing that is contrary to God's word. He must declare war, and maintain irreconcilable hostility against every sin.

But, probably, the true meaning of the text is the commonly received one, that we are not only to abstain from those things that are really and manifestly evil, but from such as are only doubtfully and in appearance such. We must avoid not only the identical thing itself, but all shows and resemblances of it.

1. Professors should abstain from the smallest beginnings of evil, the first buddings of sin; those things which would not be noticed in others, and are made apparent, like faint stains upon cambric, only by the white ground of their profession; and which after all, in the estimation of many, are so small and insignificant, as to be rather appearances than realities. Little sins lead on to greater ones, and if they did not, and were not feared on account of what they may lead to, should be shunned for their own sakes. A female, vain of her beauty, is annoyed not only by sores upon the countenance, but by freckles. A professor is not to be vain of the beauty of holiness, but still he is to be watchful of it, and must therefore avoid the smallest disfigurement of it by sin.

2. We must not venture to the extreme verge of what is good, nor try how near we can come to evil, without actually committing it. The boundary, as I have elsewhere remarked, between right and wrong, is an invisible line, which many rash adventurers have passed, ere they were aware they were approaching near to it. Besides, though it may be quite perceptible, and avoided by those who are near, yet persons who are close to it may appear to others, who look from a distance, to be gone over it. It is a most dangerous thing for ourselves, to go as near sin as we can without committing it; and as to observers, there are many to whom we are certain,

in such a position, to seem to be committing it. A sober, serious, conscientious, and considerate Chr tians, try to keep far within the territory of holine being aware that the border country is general disputed ground, and much infested by maraud from the opposite land, who are lying in ambush make captives of those who adventure beyond t line of their defence. But there are many of an c posite description, who have so little circumspecti and tenderness of conscience, that if they can k keep themselves from that which is intrinsically a notoriously evil, make no scruple of venturing up the borders and edges of sin.

3. We must take care not to "let our good be e spoken of:" for even virtues may be sometimes exercised, or exercised in conjunction with such ci cumstances as to give them the appearance of ev There is, in some instances, as great a want of jud ment in the doing of what is good, as there is others a want of conscience in the doing of what evil, and, in the end, with much the same result; mean, the disparagement of religion. It is tru painful to think how much of real and even emine holiness has, in some cases, been witnessed, not on without admiration, but with disgust; and has be spoken of rather with contempt than applause, mer ly in consequence of the encrustations of folly l which it has been disfigured. A professor, emine for her earnest solicitude about her soul, in her an iety to grow in grace, and keep up the vitality religion, will, perhaps neglect all the duties of h household, and leave a sick child to servants, in c der to attend a prayer-meeting or a sermon. A se ond, in his zeal for the cause of Christ, will gi that property for its support which belongs to creditors. A third, in his hatred of sin, will be guil

of all kinds of rudeness in reproving transgressors. Mercy sometimes degenerates into a pernicious weakness, justice into harshness, spirituality into cant, humility into meanness, devotion into superstition, and a tender conscience into a diseased one If it be injurious, and most injurious it is, to the cause of holiness, to give the names of virtue to vice, and thus reconcile men to a bad thing by the potent spell of a good word, it is not much less so, perhaps, to disgust men against what is really good, by affixing to it the appearance of what is evil. Names have a mighty influence in human affairs. Hence the wo denounced against those, who call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!—Isaiah, v. 20.

4. The rule commands us to abstain from what appears to ourselves of doubtful propriety. There are many things, of which the sinfulness is so manifest; which have so much of the palpable substance as well as the appearance of evil, that they are shunned without a moment's hesitation, by every one who has the least regard to the authority of God. But there are others, the criminality of which is not so clear, and of which, therefore, even a good man may stand in doubt. We oftentimes meet with such things, and are in much and painful indecision whether we may carefully venture upon them or not. This is the state of mind, which has been called "*a doubting conscience.*" The apostle has laid down rules for guiding us safely out of this dilemma, and which are sufficiently plain for all ordinary cases. "He that doubteth is damned (condemned) if he eat, for whatsoever is not of faith (that is, which a man does not believe he may lawfully do) is sin."—Rom. xiv. 23. Doubts about the propriety of an action are strong

presumptive evidence that it is unlawful, for they must have their origin in the perception of some appearance of evil. Still there are persons of such a timid and nervous constitution, of such a physical incapability of coming to *any* conclusion that shall be free from all scruples, that if they never acted till they had got rid of *all* doubts, they would never act at all. The following rules may, perhaps, be of service to such persons, and indeed to all.

When in the proposed actions all the doubts lie on one side there need be no hesitation. When one action will promote our interest, and the other oppose it, the probability is, that the way of duty lies in the course which is disadvantageous to us. It is always best, in doubtful cases, to take the safer side; that which, as far as we can judge, will involve least risk of our own reputation, and the comfort and well-being of others. It is well, in some difficult cases, to suppose the affair to belong to some body else, and to look at it, as far as we can, as theirs, and then to ask ourselves the question, "How should I judge for *them?*" and *vice versa*, to suppose them looking upon us, and to say, "What will be *their* opinion how I ought to act?" In all cases we should consult the word of God; but not, however, to find passages which will favour that side of the question to which we are already, perhaps, inclined, but with a sincere desire to know the will of God, and, at the same time, accompanying this exercise with fervent prayer to God for direction. If, after all, we should be still in doubt, we may then ask the opinion and advice of some discreet Christian friend or friends, on whose judgment and conscientious impartiality we can rely.

When we have thus endeavoured to know what is right, we are to proceed to action, and should not

allow ourselves to be checked, interrupted, or distressed by any speculative doubts, or by the fears and misgivings of a sensitive and somewhat morbid imagination. We must be led by judgment, and, in some cases, against the doubts and fears that arise from these sources. There is frequently an apprehensiveness which makes some persons pause and hesitate, and almost resolve to turn back, even when their judgment urges them on; just like that groundless fear, which makes a timid traveller doubt and ready to return, although the finger-post over his head, and the mile-stone by the wayside tell him he is right. A really sincere desire to know and do the will of God, at all risk and all costs, will rarely leave a person in much doubt, as to what is right to be done. God has promised to guide the weak in judgment, and to show them his way. As a general principle, then, it holds good, that what appears to be evil *is* evil, and must be abstained from. We must not go on against the convictions of our judgment, nor even its well-grounded fears. When conscience meets us in the path we are going, striding across the road, as did the Angel to resist the progress of Balaam, we must not resolve to force a passage, and continue our course.

A question will, perhaps, arise in the minds of some, of this import, "Are we bound in *all* cases to follow the dictates of conscience? If so, as conscience is often misinformed, and erroneous, we may sometimes do that conscientiously which is evil."—True it is, as Christ foretold his disciples, many have thought they did God service when they persecuted and murdered his saints. And the apostle tells us, that in his unbelieving state, he verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth; and yet, though he did it igno-

rantly, at the dictate of an erroneous conscience, he calls himself on that account the "chief of sinners." It is not to be doubted that others do many evil things, and yet act conscientiously therein. How, then, are we to judge? If we say that conscience is *not* to be followed in all things, we depose this internal monitor from his throne, and affirm that we are not always bound to do that which we believe to be right; while, if we say we always *are* to follow conscience, we seem to prove, that some do right in sinning against God, because they do it conscientiously.

It will help us out of this difficulty, to consider what is conscience. It is that power which the mind possesses of judging its own actions, by comparing them with some acknowledged rule of conduct, and of approving or condemning them according as they agree or disagree with it; together with that susceptibility of self-approbation, or pain of remorse, which follows the verdict. Conscience is not the rule of action, but the faculty of judging ourselves *by* a rule. This rule is the word of God. When, therefore, the question is asked, "What is right?" we answer, not what conscience, but what the Scriptures declare to be so. Still, however, the question returns, ought we not to do that which we believe is enjoined upon us by the word of God? I answer, yes; but then we ought also to form a right judgment of the word itself. We are responsible for our opinions. Our duty, therefore, may be thus stated: *our conscience must be first directed by the rule of Scripture, and our lives guided by our conscience.* It is certainly true, that if we act in opposition to our conscience, we sin; and no less true, that we sin if our conscience is opposed to the word of God. We hence see the necessity of searching the Scriptures with trembling awe, simplicity of

mind, and earnest prayer to God. And we may rest assured, that whatever we do, which is condemned by this infallible rule, will be considered and treated by God as sinful, notwithstanding it has been done at the dictate of conscience; for the error of the judgment must have originated in something wrong in the heart, some deficiency of caution in examination, or some prejudice or selfish end we wished to serve, by which evidence was resisted, and a wrong conclusion drawn.

5. We ought in many cases to abstain from what appears evil to others. Here, of course, some exceptions must be made.

If any thing which is good in itself should appear evil in their eyes, we are not in this case to avoid it. The whole Christian religion appeared evil in the eye of the Pagans among whom it was first propagated, and was persecuted by them as such. Protestantism appears evil in the eyes of Papists: Nonconformity appears evil in the eyes of High Churchmen; and spiritual piety appears evil in the eyes of worldly-minded people to this day. In all cases of this kind, and in whatever is our duty to God, we must disregard the opinion of the world, and do what is right. To all who would turn us from the path of duty, we must give the Apostle's reply, "Whether it be right to obey men rather than God, judge ye." We must not venture upon a scandal to the church, to avoid a scandal to the world. It would be a most preposterous kind of charity to please men by disobeying God. Though all the world should utter its howl against the strictness of our religion, and demand a relaxation of it, we must not gratify their humour, nor seek to win them, by relaxing the least part of that severity which the law of God and our own conscience require of us.

If the strictness of our religion should, as it sometimes may, accidentally prove an occasion of sin to our neighbour, we are not, even on that account, to abate it. There is no doubt that fervent and consistent piety does oftentimes excite not only the ridicule, but the malice of the wicked. It has not unfrequently happened, that they have been provoked into a truly diabolical spirit, and have been irritated by the religion of their friends into greater lengths of wickedness, till those very friends have been ready to conceal or give up much of their religion, under the idea of preventing the wickedness it seemed to occasion. But this is wrong. Our Lord was a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to the Jews; some were scandalized at his doctrine, as a despiser of the law of Moses: others at his conduct, as being a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, and a Sabbath-breaker: but yet for all these calumnies he altered nothing in his teaching or in his conduct, but amidst all their clamours still went on preaching and doing. Those that are his disciples must also go on in their course of spiritual religion, although they should perceive that evil men on this account, wax worse and worse in their hatred of God and his people. Much spiritual discretion, I admit, is required not to offend unnecessarily, by adding to our religion that which God has not commanded; by performing religious duties out of place and season; by the rigid maintenance of an unprescribed precision; and especially by needlessly obtruding our piety in a way that looks like ostentation and parade. All sacrifice of principle, and violations of conscience; all giving up of acknowledged duties for the sake of preventing the outbreaks of wickedness, softening prejudice, and conciliating

good-will, is doing evil ourselves, to keep others from doing it.

Nor must we sacrifice our principles, and act in opposition to our conscience, even to please the church of Christ. We must separate from what we deem to be an unscriptural communion, and abstain from what we consider a sinful practice, although it be under the condemnation of many professors of religion, or even the majority of them. Separation from our brethren without a cause, and opposition to them without sufficient reason, are evil, as disturbing, without grounds, the unity and peace of the church; but where there *is* ground and reason for these, such conduct is strictly proper. "If that appear a duty to us," says Bishop Hopkins, a former Prelate of the Irish Church, "that hath an appearance of evil to the generality of the most sober-minded and serious Christians, why, now, though this should not presently sway our consciences, yet it should engage us to make a strict search and inquiry, whether it be our duty or not; if it be that which is contrary to the opinion and practice of holy and pious Christians, it ought to have this authority with us, to put us to a stand, and to make us examine whether that we account a duty be a duty or not. As, for instance, some among us at this day are persuaded that they ought to worship God one way, and some another; and what appears to be a duty to one, hath the appearance of evil in it to another. Why, now, follow neither of these because it is *their* judgment and practice; but yet if thy persuasion be contrary to the persuasion of the most pious and sober minded Christians, this ought so far to prevail as to make men suspect lest they are mistaken, and to put them upon diligent inquiry and an important search into *their* grounds and arguments,

but after all, still follow that which you are convinced in your own conscience is your duty, how evil soever it may appear to others, one way or another." These remarks must commend themselves by their candour as well as truth, to every honest mind, and had they been acted upon by the bulk of professing Christians in every age, would have spared the ecclesiastical historian the trouble of recording the thousand angry controversies and horrid persecutions, which have disfigured his pages, and disgraced the various parties which for the time have gained the ascendant in Christendom. Schism and persecution would never have existed, though many separations would: but the seceders would have acted cautiously and conscientiously, while those from whom they had retired, perceiving upon what motives they had acted, would have reverenced the principle, however they may have lamented the act, and neither attempted to crush them with the arm of power, nor brand them with the charge of schism.

The appearance of evil, which we are to avoid out of regard to the feelings of others, is such as appertains *to things indifferent*, or in other words, is connected with the enjoyment of our Christian liberty. Amidst the infinite diversity of human opinion, it is to be looked for, that some things of a perfectly neutral character, which may be done or not done without blame in either case, will appear evil to some; and from which, therefore, in some cases, it is both matter of charity and duty in a Christian to abstain. The manner in which we are to use our liberty in things indifferent is stated at length in Rom. xiv., and 1 Cor. viii. A question had arisen in the primitive church, about the lawfulness of eating meat that had been offered to idols, and of attending the feasts that were held in the heathen temples

honour of the god. Some of the primitive professors reasoned thus, "I believe the idol to be a mere nullity, and therefore can, not only eat the flesh of animals that had been offered in sacrifice to him, but I can even go to his feast, for the so-called deity is, in my esteem, a nonentity, a mere name." "But," says the apostle, "take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any see thee which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?"—1 Cor. viii. 9—11. Now, observe the apostle's noble, charitable, and self-denying resolution, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, (i. e. if my example lead him to sin) I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." The same reasoning is applied to a similar case stated in Rom. xiv., and the same conclusion is come to: "Let us follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another." "We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. Even as Christ pleased not himself." This, then, is the law of Christian liberty in things indifferent. When we do those things which we know to be lawful, yet still not obligatory, but which others think to be sinful, we do not act charitably, and such things therefore should be avoided: to do them is not an act of duty, for they are confessedly indifferent, and to leave them undone is not an act of sin; while the doing of them, in such circumstances, is attended with many disadvantages. 1. Your

own piety is brought into suspicion. 2. Others may be unnecessarily grieved, and the communion of saints be interrupted. 3. Some may be led by your example to do the same things in opposition to their conscience, and even to go much further in what is wrong.

Still this deference to the opinions of others, has its limits, nor does it, in any case, forbid the attempt to remove their scruples by argument and persuasion. We are not obliged to consult the whims and caprices of every ignorant or fastidious individual who chooses to take exception to our conduct; nor to submit to the unreasonable and impertinent interference of every one who assumes a right to call us to account; much less to solicit the opinions of our neighbours on all occasions, for this would be endless and ridiculous; but still a man who is regardful, and every man ought to be regardful, of his own Christian reputation, the credit of religion, and the comfort, especially the safety of his neighbour, will often say to himself, in reference to a particular action, or course of actions, "Well, although I could do this with a clear conscience, because I believe it is quite lawful; yet, as I am not obliged to do it, and I know it is thought to be wrong by others, I will abstain from it, lest I injure my religious profession in their estimation, or lead them, by my example, to do the same thing, in opposition to their own conscience." Many a professor has injured, if not ruined his reputation for ever, in the estimation of some persons, by actions which appeared quite lawful in his own eyes, and, perhaps, were really so, but they were not thought so by those observers of them. *Their* decision was contrary to charity; but *his* conduct was no less contrary to prudence. Reputation is a thing which no man may trifle with

but which every one must watch with a sleepless and jealous vigilance; and it is assailable from so many quarters, and wounded by such small, and seemingly contemptible weapons, that we must never be off our guard. It is not enough to do what we know to be good, but we must ever be studious to avoid what others imagine to be evil. We must not only be harmless as doves, but wise as serpents. It is our duty, in some cases, to yield to the ignorance we cannot enlighten, and to give way to the prejudice we cannot convince. We must never, I allow, carry our candour so far as to give up principle to our own harm, nor bow to prejudice to our neighbour's; but when we can give way without the risk of injury to ourselves or our neighbour, and with the probability of good to both, no obstinate attachment to our own opinion should prompt us to stand out. Great sacrifice of feeling, and considerable self-denial, will be sometimes necessary to act upon this plan: but, then, what is religion but one continued course of self-denial. Taking up the cross is the condition on which alone we can be accepted as a disciple of Christ. It may, perhaps, occasionally inflict a wound upon our pride, make a deduction from our self-importance, and be felt as an abridgement of our independence, to make this concession to weakness or fastidiousness; but it is due alike to ourselves, to our neighbour, and to God. It is the law of religion; and, after all, is the perfection of human character, which consists of the admixture, in due proportions, of the opposite elements of self-wilfulness and servility. Sin, in any form, and in any degree, is so evil, and should be felt by the Christian to be so hateful and disgraceful, that he should wish to stand clear of it, and be acquitted, not only in the court *of conscience*, and of God, but

at the bar of every human being upon earth. His religious character, as a professor, should be as dear to him, and guarded with as much care, as that of her social reputation to a female, to whom it is not sufficient to know that she has committed no violation of the law of chastity, but wishes to avoid what might *appear* to be such, in the estimation of all, and who would not be suspected by a single individual in the world.

Professors, consider this close and comprehensive rule of conduct. It is not enough not to *do* evil, for we must not even *seem* to do it: we must avoid the first for the sake of conscience, and the second for the sake of reputation; the first for our own sake, the second for our neighbour's sake; and both for God's sake. It is not enough to ask concerning an action, "Is it lawful?" but "is it seemly?" nor must we say, "*Prove* that it is evil, and I will abstain from it;" but "If it has the shadow, though it has not the substance, the mere show of evil, I will avoid it." And if, then, we are to avoid the resemblances of evil, how much more evil itself: if what only some men *think* to be sin, how much more what all men know to be such. And while we are to abstain from the mere likenesses of evil, we are also not to be content with the mere likenesses of good; the former as too much, and the latter as too little, to content a Christian mind. By giving ourselves to follow the shadows of evil, we may sink to perdition, while the mere shadow of good will never lead us to heaven.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

THERE is such a precept as *this* in the New Testament, "*Be not conformed to this world.*" It is unrepealed, and in full force; and is as binding upon us, as it was in the days of the apostles. There may exist difficulties in the way of ascertaining its meaning, its applicableness, and its limits, but it *has* a meaning Christians, and even expositors of scripture, may differ in their opinions of its import, but still it *is* a rule of Christian conduct. There are passages similar to it in the word of God; such as the following, to which the reader is earnestly requested to turn.—1 John, ii. 15, 16. Matthew, vi. 24. Gal. i. 10, James, iv. 4. To what does the the rule apply? Not merely to actual vice: immorality is forbidden in other places where its acts are enumerated and branded: nor on the other hand, can it intend to set the Christian in *all things* in direct contrariety to the world. It is not a command to useless and unmeaning singularity for the sake of singularity. The world is sometimes and in some things right; and in all that is kind, courteous, polite and honourable, in all the innocent usages of society, in all the pure tastes and lawful pursuits of our neighbours, we may be conformed to the world. But there are many things which occupy a kind of middle place between these two things; they are

not absolutely immoral, nor are they innocent, pure, lawful for a Christian. They are sinful, but yet not what are usually denominated vicious: and some of them are things lawful in their nature, and made wrong only by excess. They are matters which a man may carry on, and yet not lose his reputation with the multitude, even as a professor; and yet they are forbidden.

What is the meaning of the rule?

It will help us to determine this, if we turn back and consider what a profession of religion implies—which is, that we take the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, Lord, and example; are supremely intent upon the salvation of our souls as the great end and object of existence; and make the word of God the rule of our conduct. In these things we are different from the world around us. This, in fact, constitutes the difference. We acknowledge ourselves to be a peculiar people, and that this separation is visibly maintained by our entire submission to the laws of Christ. We say to all around us, "Whatever you seek, I am seeking salvation; whatever rules of conduct you observe, I obey the laws of Christ, as laid down in the New Testament. I am governed by these laws in *all things;* and I cannot allow you to obtrude upon me *your* rules of action. I am determined in what is right or wrong, not by the law of honour, or fashion, or ambition, but by the commands of Christ." Now this is really the import of a Christian profession, and therefore conformity to the world must be tried by this. The member of a community or of a family situated in the midst of other states or families, must be governed by the laws of his own community, and must not allow the laws of these other states or families to be obtruded upon him, but must obey his own. So the Christian

church is a community situated in the midst of the world, and has laws of its own, which it must obey, and not allow the world to impose upon it their maxims, customs, and rules of action. It is not to allow a foreign jurisdiction to come in and modify and relax its code, under the pretext that it is too rigid or severe; too much in opposition to the systems that prevail around. A professor, as long as he is such, must obey the precepts of Christ's kingdom, and if he will not, he should retire. The church is Christ's community, peculiar in its nature, different from all others, being a strictly spiritual kingdom, which is not of this world: it is peculiar in its design, being intended to show forth the glory of God in its present sanctification and eternal salvation, through Christ. It must keep up, not let down its singularity; it must maintain its peculiarity of nature and design, as a holy, heavenly body, and not do any thing to soften it down, and blend itself with the kingdoms of this world. All attempts on the part of its members, to accommodate it to the community by which it is surrounded, is an encroachment on the authority of its head, an incipient alteration of its nature, and a frustration of its design.

We are now prepared to see what conformity to the world is forbidden to a professing Christian.

1. *A conformity of Spirit:* and what is the spirit of the world? It is described by the apostle, where he says, "*they mind earthly things.*"—Phil. iii. 19. This is a concise, emphatic, and accurate description of a worldly man; his supreme, yea, exclusive desire, aim, and purpose, is to get as much, and enjoy as much, of the world as he can. He thinks of nothing else, and wishes for nothing else. His hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, desires and dread, are all of the earth, *earthly*. This is set forth in an-

other form by the Psalmist, "There be many that say, who will show us any good?" This is also an emphatic description of a worldly mind, an exclusive regard to, and wish for, earthly possessions and enjoyment. We have still another representation of it in the rich man in the parable, who, upon the increase of his wealth, is made to say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."—Luke, xii. 19. Here, then, is a worldly spirit, a *making the world the highest object of pursuit, and the chief source of enjoyment.* This shows itself in various ways; a love of pleasure in one; avarice in another; ambition in a third; exclusive delight in home in another. In proportion, therefore, as a Christian partakes of this, he is worldly-minded. If he appear like one whose supreme aim is to be rich and happy on earth; if he appears to be continually intent on increasing his wealth and multiplying his comforts; if he look like a man who is entirely occupied in enjoying himself here, no matter how remote he may be from covetousness, or ambition, or sensuality; no matter how pure and innocent his tastes may be, he is a worldly-minded man. It is the intention of Christ's kingdom to exhibit a community who live by faith; whose delight is in God; whose joy and peace come from believing; who are not so much seeking to be happy now, as preparing to be happy hereafter. Just in so far as it appears that a Christian is more anxious about the body than his soul; earth than heaven; time than eternity; temporal possessions, than eternal salvation; and just in so far as he seems to derive his happiness from things of sense, rather than things of faith, he is conforming to the world; for the spirit of the world is an *earthly* spirit.

2. Our nonconformity to the world must include in it *a stern refusal to adopt those corrupt principles, or rather that want of principle, on which a great part of the modern system of trade is conducted.* I dwell on this subject, with a repetition, that many will dislike, and because of its great importance and necessity. We are commanded to follow whatsoever things are true, just, honest, lovely, and of good report; and we are to do nothing that is contrary to this rule This is the Christian law of trade; this is the New Testament system of commercial morality, from which we may not depart. In reply to all this, it is said by many professors, that if they do not, in some degree, conform to the practices of others, in the manner of conducting their business, although their practices cannot be justified on the ground of scripture, they cannot live. Then, I say, they *ought not*, in their meaning of the phrase, to live. For what *does* it mean? Not that they cannot subsist, but that they cannot live so comfortably; cannot have so good a house, such elegant furniture, and such luxurious diet. What saith Christ—"If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched."—Mark, ix. 43. "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."—Mark, viii 34. There was an age of the church, when its members were required to burn a little incense to the statue of the gods or the emperors, and upon non-compliance with the command, were hurried off to be torn to pieces by lions in the amphitheatre. Upon that single act, because it was regarded as a test of Christian character and influence, depended not only their property or liberty, but their life; and myriads sacrificed their lives re-

ther than conform. What is now the ordeal? What is now the trial of integrity? Not an act of homage to Jupiter or Trajan; but bowing the knee, and burning incense to Mammon. And shall there be no martyrs for Christian morality, even as there were once martyrs for Christian doctrine? If the early Christians could not serve God and Jupiter, shall we try to serve God and Mammon? If they hesitated not to sacrifice their *lives* for their profession, shall we think it hard to give up a portion of our *gains*? Trade is the trial of the church in the present day, and fearful are the disclosures which it makes. Other ages, besides our own, have been, in some measure, exposed to this trial. "The disciples of Wycliffe," says the Roman Inquisitor, Reinher, "are men of a serious, modest deportment, avoiding all ostentation in dress, mixing little with the world: they maintain themselves wholly by their own labour, and *utterly despise wealth, being content with bare necessaries.* THEY FOLLOW NO TRAFFIC, BECAUSE IT IS ATTENDED WITH SO MUCH LYING, SWEARING, AND CHEATING. They are chaste and temperate, are never seen in taverns, or amused by the trifling gaieties of life." To go out, or keep out of business, however, in order to avoid its snares, is not required of Christians; but it is evidently their duty to avoid all ways of transacting it that are contrary to the rules of the word of God: the morality of which does not fluctuate with the customs of men and the manners of the age. If we cannot get any thing more than bread and water, without lying and fraud, we must be content even with this hard fare.

3. We are not to conform to the world, *by a deference to its opinions, on questions of right and wrong.* Our opinions must be taken from the word of God, and must be in accordance with that. It must be

r standard of sentiment; and we must not adopt
y other. It must be the reason and only reason,
y we approve or condemn any thing. We must
k the question, "what saith the scripture on this
bject?" and not, "what saith the world?" Hav-
g a certained what is the will of God, what is the
w of Christ, we must never want, or care about,
e world's opinion; much less must we seek, or in
y way desire to bring down the law of Christ to
e world's taste or approbation. We must neither
o a thing, nor avoid it, simply because the world
pproves or disapproves of it. In many things we
hall coincide with the world, but it must not be for
he sake of conciliating their favour, or commenda-
ion, but because the thing itself is right. There is,
n many Christians, an excessive and sinful deference
o the opinion of worldly people, an obvious wish to
stand well with them, to get as near to them as they
an, without being actually of their party; a constant
im and endeavour to conciliate their esteem, by
humouring their prejudices, thinking, as much as
possible, as *they* think, saying as they say, doing as
they do, till the world conclude that these compliant
professors are almost won to their party. An anx-
ety to gain the world's good opinion, on the part of
a Christian, is a decisive evidence of that conformity
o it, which is sinful. I do not advocate or recom-
mend rudeness, misanthropy, or vulgarity; a Chris-
ian may be, and should be, polite, courteous, and re-
ined: but not because the world admires these things,
ut because they are right. He should seek to please
is neighbour; but then it is only so far as he can
lease God, and his own conscience, and even then,
ot to gain his neighbour's applause, but for his good
o edification. He should, of course, be anxious to
ave the world's testimony *to his* Christian integrity

and consistency: but this is not from a deference to the opinion of the world, but for its welfare, his own reputation, the credit of religion and the glory of Christ. To give up any one single point of duty, however minute; to alter any one single religious custom, or habit; to relax in any one conscientious pursuit, or even to conceal any one peculiarity of our profession, from a dread of the ridicule of the fashionable, the contempt of the wise, or the neglect of the great: and on the other hand, to do any thing, however trivial or insignificant, which our conscience tells us is sinful, in order to avoid these consequences, is a fearful indication of conformity to the world.

4. We ought not to conform to the world, *in such of its social habits, customs, and practices, as are directly or indirectly opposed to the laws of Christ, the spirit of true piety, and the ends of a Christian profession.*

By this rule, theatrical representations must be condemned, as opposed to the laws of Christian morality; and balls, card-parties, and public concerts as opposed to the spirit of religion and the ends of a Christian profession; and for this same reason, large mixed parties, where religious exercises are excluded to make way for dancing, music, and singing. It may not be possible to say, exactly, how many persons, nor what kind of occupations, shall constitute a party, into which a Christian may lawfully adventure: we can only state general principles, remind him of the important design of his profession, and then refer him to his judgment and conscience. It is obvious that the tendency, in the present day, is not towards too much separation and seclusion, but towards too much company, and company too much mixed, for Christian association and edification. The large and gay parties which some nominal Christians

ent, are an inappropriate adjunct, and exposition
ir profession. There is little in such circles
enial with the spirit of piety; little that is calcu-
to promote spirituality of mind; little that befits
son, set apart to be a follower of the Lamb, a
ss for God, and a probationer for heaven. The
the music, the frivolous discourse, the gay ap-
, assort but ill with the spirit of penitence, of
er, of faith. A professor, in such a situation, can
er get good, nor do good; he not only cannot
luce his religion, but he cannot promote the
of common humanity; nor communicate or re-
useful knowledge. Parties are convened for
ement, and every thing besides this is thought
f season and out of place. Now, it may be dif-
to prove, apart from his profession, that these
s are wrong; but then, by his profession, he
be tried. I am speaking of professors. A pro-
r is one who is Christ's; one who desires to obey
and to promote his glory in the world; one
e desires may be summed up in the supreme
and aim to be assimilated to Christ, to be pre-
l for eternal glory, and to bring his fellow men
partakers of the same hope: one who is pray-
nd seeking to be dead to the world, to crucify
lesh, and to get ready for the coming of the Son
d. Is it so, or is it not? If not, what does a
ssion imply? If it does imply all this, then here
ule of action, a test of the propriety of a thou-
things, which might otherwise be the subject of
debate. "A child can much more easily de-
whether a thing be right, by considering if it
e acceptable to the mind of his father, than he
settle its propriety by argument. So a Chris-
an more easily decide what is right, by consid-
what will be approved by the mind of Christ,

than by reducing it to the touchstone of logical proof. The inhabitant of Sparta could see at once that many things were inconsistent with the design of his republic, and his character as a Spartan, which he could by no means settle in an abstract manner. Whether the aim of the Athenian was proper, or the mild and soft pleasures of the Corinthian, he might not be able to settle by argument, but they would not be the way to train up the Lacedemonian. So it might become a question of abstract casuistry, about a thousand scenes of amusement. It might be easy to argue by the hour in favour of parties of pleasure, and theatres, and ball-rooms, and gaiety, and all the variety of fashionable life, and the mind might 'find no end in wandering mazes lost.' But apply the safe rule before us, and all mist vanishes. *Since the beginning of the world, it is to be presumed, that no professing Christian ever dreamed that he was imitating the example of Jesus Christ, or promoting his own salvation, or the salvation of others, or honouring the Christian religion, in a theatre, a ball-room, or a splendid party of pleasure.* And equally clear would be this decision in reference to multitudes of pleasures, which it is useless to specify. Our profession *must* be the test of what is right, or wrong, for us; or rather the word of God, which we profess to make the rule of our conduct."*

* "The rule of Christianity in regard to conformity to the World." Reprinted from an American edition of a Sermon, by the Rev. Albert Barnes, of Philadelphia, by Ball, Paternoster Row. This is an incomparably excellent discourse, to which I am indebted for many sentiments and expressions in this chapter; and which I most cordially recommend in its present elegant and cheap form, to all professing Christians. It is printed for the pocket, price 3d. and the profits are given to a charitable institution. Professors! Buy it: Read it: Practice it.

This test will decide what is improper in dress, rniture, equipage, social intercourse. All restless nbition to rise above our condition and circumances, to outshine our equals, and vie with superis; all anxious desire and eager endeavour to apar genteel, and to be thought so; all unnecessary travagance and show, even when our income can stain it; every thing in short that evinces a dispotion to be admired by the world, that looks like the orkings of a mind more intent on earth than heaven, ore solicitous to be happy here than to prepare for ppiness hereafter, is unquestionably a conformity o the world, forbidden by the precepts of God's word, nd the principles of our profession. An obvious agerness to be fashionable in our dress, and social habits; a wish to be considered a person of elegant taste; an endeavour to maintain intercourse with the gay; a constant change and heavy expense to keep up with the fluctuations of fashion, are all violations of the rule of Christianity. And so also is the too common practice of bringing up children, with a far greater attention to fashionable accomplishments, than genuine religion. The piety of their children is the last thing which many who call themselves Christians seem to think of. Schools for girls are selected with far greater solicitude about the dancing, music and drawing masters, and the French teacher, than for the religious character of the establishment; and in the education of boys, Latin, Greek, and the mathematics, are far more thought of than religion.

Nor must I pass over another odious and criminal indication of worldly-mindedness among professors, I mean the preference which is often given to the ect with which they will unite themselves, and the ongregation with which they will publicly worship od, and which is decided not on the ground of

greater adaptation to personal edification, but of worldly respectability. A fashionable section of the Christian church, and a respectable congregation of that section, are among the demands of some, who would be thought pious too, in the present day. They wish to go genteelly to heaven. They have no objection to evangelical sentiments now they can hear them from the lips of a preacher whom the gay and the great flock to hear: and can endure the most heart-searching discourses, since they are delivered to assemblies in which the diamond sparkles, over which the ostrich wing waves, to which the silk-worm has lent the satin and the velvet, and which the peer dignifies with the coronet. O who would not be religious when they can join in the same prayer or hymn with the aristocracy of trade or of rank. Alas, alas, such professors had they lived in the days of "the Man of Sorrows," the reputed son of Joseph, the carpenter, who lived on charity, and whom the common people heard gladly, would have been Jews and not Christians, for the former had the fashion on their side: or had they lived in the days of the apostles they would never have been the followers of fishermen and tent-makers, but would have gone with the patrician orders to the temples of the gods.

Beware then, professors, of the love of the world, even in that form of it which appears most blameless, I mean making it the supreme end of life to get money, though by honest industry, and to live genteelly.

"So far," says Mr. Fuller, "is the love of the world from being the less dangerous on account of its falling so little under human censure, that it is the more so. If we be guilty of any thing which exposes us to the reproach of mankind, such reproach may assist the remonstrances of conscience, and of God,

arrying conviction to our bosoms; but of that for
ch the world acquits us, we shall be exceedingly
osed to acquit ourselves.

It has long appeared to me that this species of
etousness will, in all probability, prove the eternal
rthrow of more characters among professing peo-
than almost any other sin; and this because it is
ost the only sin which may be indulged, and a
fession of religion at the same time supported. If
an be a drunkard, a fornicator, an adulterer, or a
; if he rob his neighbour, oppress the poor, or
l unjustly, he must give up his pretensions to reli-
n; or if not his religious connexions, if they are
rthy of being so denominated, will give him up:
he may *love the world and the things of the
rld*, and at the same time retain his character. If
depravity of the human heart be not subdued by
grace of God, it *will* operate. If a dam be plac-
across some of its ordinary channels, it will flow
h greater depth and rapidity on those that remain.
s thus, perhaps, avarice is most prevalent in old
e, when the power of pursuing other vices, has in
reat measure subsided. And thus it is with reli-
us professors, whose hearts are not right with God.
ey cannot figure away with the profane, nor in-
ge in gross immoralities; but they can love the
rld supremely, and be scarcely amenable to hu-
n judgment."

Christians, I call you to fight the good fight of
th; one great part of which is, to attack and sub-
the world. How can you satisfy yourselves
t you are the children of God, if this victory be
gained, when it is said, "whatsoever is born of
d, overcometh the world; and this is the victory
t overcometh the world, even our faith."—1 John,
4. Renew the conflict, grapple with the foe, de-

termine by divine grace to conquer. Understand well the means of maintaining the contest and securing the victory. It is by faith alone you can become conquerors. Losses, trials, afflictions, disappointments, sorrows will not do it: these things have made men hate the world, and flee from it, but not conquer it; have broken their hearts *in* the world, but not from it; and in some instances have made them cling the closer to what was left. It is faith alone, that can really exalt the Christian above the sphere of earthly things, and raise him to that lofty mind in which he is so satisfied with the present enjoyment of God, and the hope of future glory, that he is neither weary of the world nor fond of it. Keep faith in exercise; faith, which by truly believing in the truth of gospel revelation, realizes the existence of invisible and eternal glory, and by uniting the soul to God through Christ, accepts the very blessedness of heaven, as our own ineffable portion. Give yourselves more to the contemplation of heavenly bliss. Consider it is the very object of your vocation. "The God of all grace has called us unto his eternal glory" —1 Peter, v. 10. It was matter of the apostle's thanksgiving on behalf of the Thessalonians, that they were called by his gospel "to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."—2 Thes. ii. 14. What a calling! And yet by allowing the world to have such power and influence over us, we are opposing the holy, divine, and God-like purpose of drawing our hearts up into heaven, and are pulling them down to earth. Has God revealed to us the heavenly state, set open the very doors and windows of the celestial temple, that we might have the lovely prospect, as far as we *can* have it, before us, and shall we not behold it? Does it become us, is it proper, that we should not open our eyes to heaven, when

God has opened heaven to us? Or shall we, in effect, tell him, that we are too much occupied with the cares of business, the comforts of home, or the enjoyments of life, to attend to or to hope for the revealed glory? O how few thoughts we have of it, how little we converse about it! How little does the prospect of the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory weigh down the griefs of our troubles, or the joy of our earthly possessions. There it is, above our heads, bright and effulgent, yet we are too much taken with the things that are of the earth, earthy, to look at it. "If one should give a stranger to Christianity an account of the Christian hopes, and tell him what they be and expect to enjoy before long, he would sure promise himself to find so many angels dwelling in human flesh, and reckon when he came among them he should be as amidst the heavenly choir; every one full of joy and praise. He would expect to find us living on earth as the inhabitants of heaven, as so many pieces of immortal glory lately dropped down from above, and shortly again returning thither. He would look to find every where in the Christian world, incarnate glory sparkling through the overshadowing veil; and wonder how this earthly sphere should be able to contain so many great souls. But when he draws nearer to us, and observes the course and carriage of our lives, when he sees us walk as other men, and considers the strange disagreement of our daily conversation to our so great avowed hopes, and how little sense of joy and pleasure we discover ourselves to conceive in them, would he not be ready to say, 'Sure some or other (willing only to amuse the world with the noise of strange things,) have composed a religion for these men which they themselves understand nothing about. If they do adopt it and *own* it for theirs, they under-

stand not their own pretences; they are taught to speak some big words, or to give a faint or seeming assent to such as speak them in their names, but it is impossible they should be in good earnest, or believe themselves in what they say or profess.' And what reply, then, should we be able to make? For who can think any who acknowledge a God, and understand at all what that name imports, should value at so low a rate, as we visibly do, the eternal fruition of his glory and a present sonship to him the pledge of so great a hope. He that is born heir to great honours and possessions, though he be at great uncertainties as to the enjoyment of them, yet when he comes to understand his possibilities and expectancies how big doth he look and speak? What grandeur doth he put on? His hopes form his spirit, and deportment. But is it proportionably so with us? Do our hopes fill our hearts with joy, our mouths with praise, and clothe our faces with a cheerful aspect, and make a holy charity appear in all our conversations?

"Doth it not argue a low sordid spirit not to desire and aim at the perfection thou art capable of, not to desire that blessedness which alone is suitable and satisfying to a reasonable and spiritual being? Bethink thyself a little, how art thou sunk into the dirt of the earth? Is the Father of spirits *thy father*? Is the world of spirits *thy country*? Hast thou any relation to that heavenly progeny? Art thou allied to that blessed family, and yet undesirous of the same blessedness? Canst thou savour of nothing, but what smells of earth? Is nothing grateful to thy soul but what is corrupted by so impure and vicious a tincture? Are the polluted pleasures of a filthy world, better to thee than the eternal visions and enjoyments of heaven? What art thou all made of

earth? Is thy soul stupified into a clod? Hast thou no sense with thee of any thing better, and more excellent? Canst thou look upon no glorious thing with a pleased eye? Thy spirit looks too like the *mundane* spirit, the spirit of the world. The apostle speaks of it by way of distinction, 'We have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit that is from God, that we might know or see (and no doubt it is desire that animates that eye, it is not bare speculative intuition, and no more) the things that are freely given us of God.'—1 Cor. ii. 12. Surely he whose desire does not guide his eye to the beholding of those things, hath received the spirit of the world only. A spirit that conforms him to this world makes him think only thoughts of this world, and drives the designs of this world, and speak the language of this world. A spirit that connaturalizes him to the world, makes him of a temper suitable to it; he breathes only worldly breath, carries a worldly aspect, is of a worldly conversation. O poor low spirit, that such a world should withhold thee from the desire and pursuit of such glory! Art thou not ashamed to think what thy desires are wont to pitch upon, while they decline and waive this blessedness? Methinks thy own shame should compel thee to quit the name of a saint or a man; to forbear numbering thyself with any that pretend to immortality, and go seek pasture among the beasts of the field, with 'them that live that low animal life, that thou dost, and expect no other.'"*

Christian professor, would you then be crucified to the world, and have the world crucified to you; would you indeed, and in truth, have the spirit of the world cast out of you; would you cease to be char-

* Howe's "Blessedness of the Righteous."

acterized as minding earthly things, and no longer bear the image of the earthly upon your soul as well as upon your body, go daily by sacred meditation, to Mount Calvary, and while all the mysteries of redeeming love, as concentrated in the cross, there meet the eye of faith, and the visions of celestial glory, seen most distinctly from that spot, attract and fix the transported gaze of hope, you will see the beauty of the earth fade away before you amidst the splendour of a more excellent glory, and feel the love of the world die within you, under the power of a stronger and a holier affection.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONDUCT OF PROFESSORS IN REFERENCE TO POLITICS.

In attempting to settle the difficult question of the tent to which a Christian may carry his active con- rn, in the affairs of civil government, or what are :hnically called politics, two things must be borne mind: *First*, that civil government and Christian- . though altogether distinct in their nature and sign, are not opposed to each other. The latter quaints us with our religious duties, or in other ›rds, how we may serve God here, and obtain eter- l salvation beyond the grave; while civil govern- ent, though sanctioned and enforced as to its gene- l principle by the New Testament, is altogether, to its specific arrangements, a provision of human ill, to secure tranquillity and freedom, during our ntinuance in the present life. "Between institu- ns," says Mr. Hall, "so different in their nature d object, it is plain no real opposition can subsist; d if they are ever represented in this light, or held be inconsistent with each other, it must proceed m an ignorance of their respective genius and ctions." It is manifest then, that there is nothing politics as such, that is incompatible with the strict- profession of Christianity. *Secondly:* It is of portance to recollect the peculiar nature of that stitution or *system of* civil government under

which our lot is cast, and which is of a compound nature, including a very large admixture and influence of popular interference. The people, as well as the Monarch and the Peers, are the depositaries of political power, and have a share in the government of the country. They, by their representatives in the Commons, assist in making the laws by which the realm is ruled. They have, therefore, a legal right to interfere, and a right, which is in fact in the view of the constitution, indefeasible. Their interference, when constitutionally exerted, is no stepping out of their place, no usurpation, no invasion of the rights and prerogatives of the rulers. Things were different when the epistles of Paul and Peter were written. There was but the shadow of popular influence left in the Roman Government; the power had passed away from the people, and they had little or no opportunity of intermeddling with the affairs of government, except in the way of insurrection and riot, which, of course, Christianity forbade, and enjoined upon those of them who had received the gospel, a submission to the powers that were. Its injunctions on this subject, are strict and explicit, as may be seen by consulting Rom. xiii, and 1 Peter, ii. But surely those passages can never be justly stretched, in a free country, and under a government admitting of popular interference, to forbid the exercise of those rights with which the subject is invested by the constitution. Even allowing that passive obedience, and unresisting submission were the duty of the inhabitants of a country that is under a despotic government, it cannot be proved that those who are in legal possession of popular rights, should renounce them, and give up all active concern in civil affairs. However difficult it may be to ascertain in what way and to what extent it would be lawful for the Chris-

tian inhabitants of Austria or Russia, to exert themselves to obtain a free government, and thus make politics a matter of practical solicitude, there can be no such difficulty as to the lawful interference, lawful both in the view of Christianity and the constitution, of the Christian inhabitants of Great Britain, for it belongs to them of right.

But perhaps it will be said, the question is not about the *right* of an Englishman's interference, for this is allowed by all: but the *expediency* of a Christian's troubling himself about these matters. It appears to me, that to a certain extent, popular rights are popular duties. Every enfranchised person is, by his representative, not only the *subject* of law, but the maker of law; and it is not only his privilege, but his duty, to seek, constitutionally, the repeal of bad laws, the improvement of defective ones, and the making of good ones. As we are governed by laws, and not merely by men, it is of immense consequence what laws are enacted; and the country, that is, all present and future generations, have a claim upon every Englishman, for his influence in seeking that our legislative code might be as conducive as can be to the welfare of the nation. *Is* it nothing to a Christian—*ought* it to be nothing, what kind of laws are made? Legislation takes cognizance of every interest he has in the world, and unless he is to give up all that concerns his individual and social rights, his domestic comforts, and his trade; he ought to pay *some* attention to the affairs of civil government. He does not cease to be a citizen, when he becomes a Christian; nor does he go out of the world, when he enters the church. Religion, when it comes to his heart in power and authority, finds him a member of society, enjoying many civil privileges, and performing many

duties, and for which he is not now disqualified, nor from which is he released by the new and more sacred obligation that he has undertaken to discharge. If we could conceive that civil affairs *generally*, are too earthly for the spiritual nature that he has now assumed to attend to, there is at least *one* view of them of transcendent importance to him, even as a Christian; I mean their connexion with the great subject of civil and religious freedom. Now, even allowing that *civil* liberty is a subject too earthly and too exciting, leading too often to the arena, and disfiguring our piety too much with the dust of political controversy; a subject which brings us too much into parties far removed from the influence of religion; what shall we say of *religious* freedom, a blessing so important to the comfortable discharge of the duties of our holy calling, and also to the leisure and opportunity necessary for promulgating religion? This is a blessing worth infinitely more to us than all our insular or continental colonies in the East or Western Indies, in Africa or in America. This precious deposit, bought by the martyr's blood, and worth even the price that millions have thus paid for it, is in our keeping under God, and ought we not to watch it well? We are trustees of this benefit for all future generations. But can we keep it in the absence of *civil* liberty? Is it to be abandoned, then, by those very men who most need the blessing, and are most dependant upon it, for their enjoyment and safety?

While, therefore, a professor, is under solemn obligations to be a loyal subject, or to submit to the king, and honour him as the executive branch of the constitution; he is also bound to be a patriotic member of the social body, by giving his practical support to the legislative branch. He is to be obedient to the

laws that are made, but he is also to give his assistance in making them. It is his duty to give his conscientious vote for the election of his representatives in his own branch of the legislature; he may join his fellow subjects to petition for the redress of civil, or ecclesiastical grievances; and, to the extent of his influence, mildly and properly exerted, without injuring his own piety and charity, or unnecessarily wounding the feelings and exciting the passions of others, he may endeavour to direct public opinion in favour of what is just and beneficial. The calm, dispassionate, charitable, and conscientious exercise of your political rights, without sectarian bitterness, and party animosity, in such *measure* as does not interfere with your own personal religion, and in such *manner* as does not wantonly injure the feelings of those who are opposed to you; which does not take you too much from your closet, your family, and your shop; if indeed you *can* thus exercise your rights, is quite lawful for you as professors. These rules and restrictions, however, must be imposed; for, without them, the subject will be sure to do you harm. A Christian must carry his religion into every thing, and sanctify every thing he does by it. "*Whatsoever* he does, he must do all to the glory of God." Every thing must be done religiously, done in such a manner that no one shall say justly, "this is contrary to his profession." His politics must form no exception to this. Even in these he must be guided by conscience, and his conscience by the word of God. He must look well to his motives, and be able to appeal to the Searcher of hearts for their purity. If his attention to these matters, be such as to flatten his own devotional spirit, take him off from his religious duties, or diminish seriously the power of godliness and the vigour of faith; if it fill his

imagination, make him restless, uneasy and anxious, disturbing the calmness of his religious peace and comfort; if it interfere more with his business than is good for his worldly prosperity, or with his family more than is consistent with his obligations to instruct and benefit them; if it injure his charity, and fill his bosom with ill-will and hatred to those who differ from him; if it lead him into political associations, and place him upon committees; if it make him looked up to as a leader and champion of a party; if it cause his pious friends to shake their heads and say, "I wish he were not quite so political;" we may be very sure, and he may be sure too, that although it is not easy to fix with precision the boundary that separates right from wrong on this subject, he has passed the line, and is on dangerous and unlawful ground.

It is our duty and interest, at all times, to observe the signs of the times, and the characteristics of the age, in order to learn the particular errors to which, in consequence of these things, we are more peculiarly exposed. Now it cannot be doubted, that the dangers of professors in the present age, is not to be too little, but too much interested in politics. Party spirit scarcely ever ran so high, and the contention of opposing factions was scarcely ever more fierce, except in times of internal commotion, than it is now. At such a period, Christians of all denominations in religion, and all parties in politics, are in danger of being too much absorbed by the engrossing questions, which are the subjects of national agitation. At such a time, and amidst such circumstances, we are all in danger of being drawn into the whirlpool, or swept away by the torrent of party questions, and having our passions far too much engaged in the collision of opposing factions. These subjects, next

to trade, are likely to become the great business of life, the theme of all circles, and all places. Not a few persons have been so far engrossed by them as to neglect their business, and to be ruined for life, and still more have lost their religion in their political fervour, and in the misery of a backsliding or apostate state have cursed the hour in which they neglected the concerns of eternity, for the struggles of the times.

Their thoughts and affections were so filled with these things, that they could neither talk nor think of any thing else; they became members of political clubs; plunged into the conflict of a contested election; became members of the committee of one of the competitors; went all lengths in the means usually resorted to on such occasions for securing the return of their favourite candidate; were found at every political dinner or meeting, and among the most forward and most zealous—in short, politics were the element in which they lived, moved, and had their being. Who can wonder at the result? Who is astonished at being informed that such men have found their way into the gazette, and that their creditors had to pay for the time they devoted to this profitless subject. What religion can live in such a state of mind as this? The newspaper supplants the Bible; the speeches and writings of politicians have far more interest for such persons than the sermons of the preacher; and the attractions of the public meeting far overpower those of the devotional service; spiritual conversation is neither relished nor encouraged, and nothing permitted, or, at least, welcomed, but the all-engrossing subject; even the Sabbath day is not exempted from the desecration of such topics; if they do not read the newspapers themselves, they inquire of those who do, or talk with

those who are as deeply engrossed as themselves by the topic. Nothing of piety remains but the name, and even that has been in some cases abandoned. Such are the rocks among which many of all parties, Whigs and Tories, Churchmen and Dissenters, for I apply the remarks to all, have split.

And if it be unmeet even for a Christian to be thus deeply immersed in party politics, how much more so for a minister of religion: and it is impossible to deny that too many of all denominations have been drawn from their sacred occupations, far more than was becoming, by this ensnaring topic. I am quite aware that there are seasons, when the nation seems to be in the very crisis of its destiny, and when, therefore, even the servant of the Lord, may feel that his country appeals to his patriotism, and asks him for his help, and when he may scarcely think he is at liberty to remain quiescent and inactive: but such seasons rarely occur in reality, though they do more frequently in men's own imaginations. It is indeed but seldom that the pulpit and the hustings are compatible with each other, and that the minister of reconciliation adds any thing to his dignity or usefulness, by the dust which he gathers up from the arena of political strife. The harangue of the public meeting gives but little emphasis to the sermon, or but ill prepares those who heard it to listen to much more solemn themes from the same lips in the sanctuary. The minister of the gospel should excite no needless prejudices in any mind, which he is sure to do by becoming a violent political partisan. Most men of all parties have good sense enough to see, that the clergy are far more in their place by the bed of the dying, in the scenes of ignorance, wretchedness, and vice, for the purpose of dispensing knowledge, holiness, and bliss, than in the

crowd and clamour, the passions and revilings of a political meeting. The time that is consumed and thus taken away from the souls committed to their care, is, perhaps, the least evil resulting from such pursuits; the more serious mischief is the influence of their example upon others, and the diminution of public respect both for the office and the object of the ministerial character.

It cannot be inferred or imagined, I hope, from any thing I have said, that I wish to detach the great body of Christians from *all* attention to the affairs of the nation, or co-operation with those who are endeavouring to give them a right direction. My object, in these remarks, is not to neutralize patriotic feeling into absolute indifference, nor to paralyze healthful and well-directed efforts for the country's good; but simply to prevent the former from becoming malignant, or excessive, and the latter from degenerating into the violent action of political partisanship. The conquest of the world which faith is called upon to achieve, is not to tear up patriotism, that fine flower of humanity, by the roots, but to prevent its attaining such a wild luxuriance as would draw away all the vigour of the soil from other and still more important plants, or would wither them by the chilling influence of its too ample shadow. "To stand by as idle spectators of the great interests of the nation, would betray a guilty negligence on our parts, at any time, but especially at the present season. If men are ever justified in turning aside from more plodding pursuits, to read the page of events, and to contemplate the broad face of empire, they are especially called to do so at those critical periods, when the mists are withdrawing, and its features are assuming a natural shape." * I do not ask, I do not

* Eclectic Review, April, 1837. See a masterly article on

wish, Christians to give up the world into the hands of the wicked, but only to let their interference be that of *religious* men, a calm, serene, patriotism; the more effectual, because of its moderation and firmness, its conscientiousness and sanctity. Every man's opinion should be made up, firmly held, publicly known, and consistently acted upon, without concealment or trimming. Neutrality is no man's glory, when great interests are in jeopardy, and great questions concerning them, are in discussion. Christianity, the dearest interest to the heart of every child of God, is, in one sense, independent of all the questions of party politics, and yet, in another, is, in some measure, as to its progress at least, affected by them: and therefore demands such attention from its subjects to the affairs of nations, and only such, as is compatible with supreme regard to its own pure laws, benign spirit, and heavenly object. As politics, therefore, are not sinful in themselves, but only in that excess of attention to them which takes a man's time too much from his business, embitters his heart towards his neighbour who differs from him in sentiment, or diminishes his religious feeling, every one must be careful to observe that moderation which Christianity prescribes in this as well as in all other matters that appeal to our appetites and our passions That is evil to us, which, either in kind or degree, is evil to our religion.

Professors then should be aware of their danger, and watch and pray lest they enter into temptation. Let them never forget that they belong to a kingdom

"The Progress of Reform." It will be a deep disgrace to the Dissenting Body if this periodical should be allowed to sink. It is our own and only Review, which combines literature and religion, and ought to be supported, and well supported too.

which is not of this world; that their citizenship is in heaven, and that therefore they should live as strangers upon the earth. As pilgrims, abiding for a short season in a strange city, they should be willing to promote its welfare during their temporary sojourn, but still with their eye, and hope, and heart, upon the land of their inheritance. A deep sense of the infinite importance of eternal salvation and invisible realities; a due impression of the shortness of time, and the uncertainty of life; together with an intelligent consideration of the great end of God in sending us into this world, would repress all undue political fervour, and teach us how to act the part of a patriot, without neglecting that of a Christian; and make us feel that we were not only the inhabitants of a country, or citizens of the world, but subjects of the universe, and that every inferior interest should be pursued with a proper regard to true religion. This we ought ever to be intent upon as our daily work, as that alone which can prepare us for heaven; so that if we were asked at any time, what we were aiming at, or what we were doing, we might be able to give this true answer, "We are dressing ourselves for eternity." No pretext, however specious, whether relating to our family or our country, can be a legitimate excuse for neglecting this preparatory process for immortality. Nothing can be conceived of more opposite to the temper of heaven, the disposition of the blessed above, which is unmingled holy love, than the political spirit, which when seen as it is now too often seen, in its most virulent form, is the gall of bitterness, and the essence of malignity. If charity be the crowning excellence of piety, how contrary to this divine virtue is the present spirit of parties, which, like a burning volcano, is perpetually pouring from its crater the fiery eruptions of envy,

malice, and all uncharitableness. Better, far better, professing Christians, never to see a newspaper, nor know a single fact, nor utter a syllable of politics, than enter into the subject if it must produce in you such a temper as this. But it need *not* produce it. There may be moderation in this as well as in any thing else. A man may be a religious patriot without degenerating into a malignant partisan. I cannot do better than close this chapter with another quotation from the works of that sublime and gentle spirit, the illustrious JOHN HOWE, whose invaluable memoir, as published by Mr. ROGERS, is a "Tract for the Times," indeed. * * "And with a proportionate unconcernedness should they look on, and behold the various alterations of political affairs, no further minding either the constitution or administration of government than as the interest of the universal Ruler, the weal and safety of their prince or country are concerned in them. But now many under the specious pretence of a public spirit, make it their whole business to inspect and pry into these affairs, even with a most meanly private and interested one; watching over the public beyond the bounds of their own calling; and with no other design, than to catch at an opportunity of serving their own turns! How many that stand perpetually at a gaze in a suspenseful expectation of how things will go; either joying or hoping to behold any favourable prognostics to the party whereto they have thought fit to addict themselves; glad or desirous to see it engross power, and grasp the sum of things, not from any sense of duties towards God's vicegerents, not from love of justice or study of public advantage, but that the happier lot may befall or remain to themselves. These men are absorbed and swallowed up of the spirit of this world, contempered only to

this sublunary region, concorporate with the earth, so as to partake in all its pangs and paroxysms, and tremulous motions. By the beating of their pulse you may know the state of things in this lower world, as if they were of the same piece, and had but one soul with it. Let them see times, and a state of things on earth suitable to their genius, and you put a new life and soul into them. Reduce them to despair here, and (so little communion have they with the affairs of that other country,) the most specious inviting representation that can be made to them of the world to come, hinders not, but their hearts languish and die, and become as stones within them.

"But that lofty soul that bears about with it the living apprehensions of its being made for an everlasting state, so earnestly intends it, that it shall ever be a descent and vouchsafement with it, if it allow itself to take notice what busy mortals are doing in their (as they reckon them) grand negotiations here below. And if there be a suspicion of an aptness or inclination to intermeddle in them to their prejudice, to whom that part belongs, can heartily say to it (as the philosopher to the jealous tyrant,) 'we of this academy are not at leisure to mind so mean things; we have somewhat else to do than to talk of you.' He hath still the image before his eyes, of this world vanishing and passing away; of the other, with the everlasting affairs and concernments of it, even now ready to take place and fill up all the stage, and can represent to himself the vision (not from a melancholic or crazed brain, but a rational faith and a sober, well-instructed mind,) of the world dissolving, monarchies and kingdoms breaking up, thrones trembling, crowns and sceptres lying as neglected things. He hath a telescope through which he can behold the glorious appearance of the

supreme Judge; the solemn state of his majestic person; the splendid pomp of his magnificent and costly numerous retinue; the obsequious throng of glorious celestial creatures, doing homage to their eternal king; the swift flight of his royal guards, sent forth into into the four winds to gather the elect, and covering the face of the heavens with their spreading wings; the universal silent attention of all, to that loud sounding trumpet that shakes the pillars of the world, pierces the inward corners of the earth, and resounds from every part of the encircling heavens; the many millions of joyful expectants arising, changing, putting on glory, taking wing, and contending upwards, to join themselves to the triumphant heavenly host; the judgment seat, the books opened, the frightful amazed books of surprised wretches; the equal administration of the final judgment; the adjudication of all to their eternal states; the heavens rolled up as a scroll; the earth and all things therein consumed and burnt up!

"And now, what spirit is there any more in him towards the trivial affairs of a vanishing world? how indifferent a thing is it with him who bears himself highest in a state of things whereof he foresees the certain hastening end. Though he will not neglect the duty of his own place, is heartily concerned to have the knowledge and fear of God more generally obtained in this apostate world, and is ready to contribute his utmost regular endeavours for the preservation of common peace and order in subserviency hereto; yet abstractedly from these considerations, and such as have been before mentioned, he is no more concerned who is uppermost, than one would be passing by a swarm of flies, which hath the largest wings, or which excels the rest in sprightliness or briskness of motion. And for himself, he

can insert this amongst his most serious thanksgivings, that while the care is incumbent on others, of watching over the public peace and safety, he may sit still and converse with God and his own sedate thoughts. How secure is he in this, that infinite wisdom governs the world! that all things shall be disposed the best way, to the best and most valuable ends: that an afflicted state shall never befall unto good men, but when it is fittest and most conducible it should do so: that the prosperity carnal appetite covets, is never denied them but when it would be pernicious! How calm is he in the midst of external troubles: how placid and serene a spirit inhabits his peaceful breast! When all things are shaken round about him, he is not shaken. He bears all sorts of troubles: but creates none to others, nor is disturbed by any himself. But they that delight to see this world rolling or fixed, as may most serve their private purposes, and have a perpetual quarrel with it, while it looks not kindly upon them: their life is bound up in it, and their pretences to another, are but the languid faint notions of what they never heartily believe nor desire. Upon the whole matter, nothing is more agreeable to this great reputation, than a steady restraint and moderation of our passions towards things without us; that is, all the several sorts of external objects and affairs, that so variously invite and tempt our observation and regard in this our present state."

CHAPTER X.

ON BROTHERLY LOVE.

It is a beautiful remark of Mr. Beverley, "That if a well-instructed physiologist were to lose his way in the pathless tracts of the earth, he would nevertheless be able to divine the country through which he was wandering, by attentively considering the productions of the soil, and the appearance of animal life surrounding him." The flowers that grew in his path, or the living creatures that crossed it, would announce to him in what zone or empire he was bending his course. "So it is in the land of Emmanuel, the delightful fruit found there and no where else, is LOVE, Christian love, love in Christ, the divine AGAPE of the word of God, the fruit of the Spirit, the evidence of the twice-born and redeemed people." Yes, it is indeed true, that love, in the Christian sense of the term, is found no where else beyond the kingdom of the Redeemer, for it grows in no soil but that of Christianity; so that when it *is* found, we may assuredly pronounce that we have reached holy land: but is this plant which is indigenous to the church of Christ found even *there* in *profusion*, in all its bloom, and beauty? Ah, no! but stinted in its growth, dismantled of its beauty, and of diminished fragrance. I join with the above mentioned writer, in acknowledging and lamenting, that there is far too little of this heavenly disposition

among the members of Christ's church upon earth, but I am persuaded that there is more of it than Mr. B. is disposed to admit. "Let us suppose," he remarks, "that by some unwonted tribulation you are bowed down with a weight of sorrow, and the cup of tears were given to you to drink in great measure—would you think of turning to that religious society of which you are a member for council and sympathy? Do you feel so bound to your nominal brethren, and are you so confident of the strength of their Christian love, that you have no doubt of their affectionate commiseration and tender support? And do you believe they are so anxious to fulfil the law of Christ according to the epitome of that law,"—Gal. vi. 2; "that you feel confident they will gladly bear your burden? Let every one answer this question according to his experience, his knowledge, and his serious belief." And if they *were* so to answer the question, myriads and myriads by tears of gratitude and smiles of joy, would testify to the kindness of their brethren in Christ, during the dark and dreary season of their sore affliction. But a few hours before this page was written, I saw the gloom of the poor man's sick chamber lighted up, and the burden of his suffering alleviated with the sunshine of his countenance, as he threw over the scene of his sorrow, his willing, grateful, and emphatic testimony to the love and sympathy of his fellow members. "And am I," he exclaimed, as the tear sparkled in his eye, "under the protection of the church?" feeling surprised, not at the unfrequency, but at the greatness of this precious privilege. And it is, blessed be the God of love, who has breathed his own nature into the hearts of his own people, no uncommon reward of a pastor's labour, as he holds his official walks among the people of his charge, often to listen

to the report they make of each other's love in the spirit. O what blessed scenes have I witnessed of brotherly kindness within the wide circle of my own church, and rejoiced over them with thankfulness, as sweet and sacred proofs that I had not preached in vain the doctrine of redeeming love, nor inculcated in vain the necessary fruit of it, the love of the brethren.

Still, however, I sorrowfully confess, that among professors of every denomination, and my own among the rest, there is far, very far, too little of this God-like temper. We are all verily guilty concerning our brother. We had all need to go again to the cross of our dying Lord, to learn how he has loved us, and how we ought to love one another. The measure of tender affection with which Christians should regard each other, is so great, that what they have done in this way, seems as nothing.

See *what* is said, and *how much*, concerning this disposition in the word of God. Scarcely any duty is enjoined with such great frequency, or in so great a variety of forms. It is the peculiar law of Christ's kingdom, "This is my commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you."—John, xv. 12. It is the identifying mark of Christ's disciples, the sign of their caste, the necessary and certain token of their discipleship. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."—John, xiii. 35. It is the fruit and evidence of our regeneration.—1 Peter, i. 22, 23. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."—1 John, iii. 14. It is the mark of spiritual prosperity in a *church*.—Eph. i. 15. It is the ground of apostolic eulogium in individual character. "I thank God, making mention

of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith which thou hast towards the Lord Jesus and all the saints."—Phil. v. It is the subject of frequent and emphatic apostolic admonition. "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ."—Gal. vi. 2. Nearly the whole of the three epistles of John were written to enforce this duty. It is dignified with the appellation of the NEW COMMANDMENT. New in its kind, its model, its strength, its motives; "*as I have loved you.*" Moses enjoined us to love our neighbour as ourselves; Christ has commanded us to love our neighbour, in one respect, more than ourselves, for we are, if need be, "to lay down our lives for our brethren."—1 John, iii, 16. This love is made the test of character at the judgment day; the want of it, the ground of condemnation to the wicked, and the possession of it, the ground of justification and approbation to the righteous. "Inasmuch as ye did it, or did it not, to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it, or did it not, to me."—Matt. xxv. Let any man read and study all these passages, and mark the vast importance which is attached to brotherly love, and then let him look round upon the church of Christ, and say if it is not yet lamentably deficient in this duty.

We should attentively consider the *grounds* on which this love is to be exercised. It is love to the *brethren*, as such; love to them for God's sake and Christ's sake—love to them as the objects of the Father's eternal, infinite, and unchangeable affection; the purchase of the Son's agonies and blood; the workmanship of the Spirit's grace. How dear the saints are to the heart of Christ and of God, none can know but the infinite mind of God. *This* is the ground of genuine love to Christians; *this* is

the *agape* of the New Testament, not an affection based on sectarian distinction, or party names; for a Jew, a Mahomedan, a Pagan may have this. If we can love only Christians of our own denomination or party; if our love be founded on the Book of Common Prayer; or on John Wesley's works; or on the Assembly's Catechism, or on adult baptism; it is not the love of the brethren, but the love of party; and much of this love of party there is where there is not one particle of love to Christ's followers: the ground of Christian love is this, "*ye are Christ's;*" any thing substituted for this or added to it, turns our affection into quite another thing. If this single idea be not of itself enough to engage our heart to any one, then we have not the love of the brethren. If his relation to Christ as one of his redeemed people, one of the members of his body, and one who bears his image, be not sufficient to attract our regards, except he be one of our own church or denomination; or if though we admit that he is all this, we feel an instant damp upon our affection, and an alienation of heart, when we are told that he is a Dissenter or a Churchman, a Calvinist or a Methodist, we are either altogether wanting or very weak in brotherly love. We may not love, indeed cannot, it would not be right, to love true Christians *because* they differ from us, but we ought to love them in spite of their differences.

The moral likeness of Christ is that one object the contemplation of which excites this holy emotion. Wherever we discover the image of Jesus, or see a course of action, which evinces the possession of his spirit, there will all the sympathies be awakened, the sensibilities be set in motion, and the feelings cluster which may be the elements of brotherly love. Let me see an individual of any colour, or

clime, or sect, who calls himself a Christian, and who in his conduct is manifestly governed by a love to Jesus, who is cultivating the heavenly dispositions, and holy habits of the Gospel, who has embarked his heart in the high interests in which God is engaged, and if I have any brotherly love in me, I see a man who has higher claims on my regard and sympathy than the mere natural relations of life can command; "loving him that begat, I love him that is begotten of him." Bound to the throne of God by those moral excellences which brighten his character, and make him an object of delightful complacency, I am also bound in affection to every son and daughter of Adam, who beholding the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, has been changed into the same image. And as he is the centre of attraction to them all, and they all alike love to sit at his feet, and imbibe his heavenly spirit, so also do they love to contemplate the faintest reflections of his glory wherever visible. If I were in a foreign country, surrounded by strangers, and saw, in different situations, and among different people, the portrait of a beloved and honoured father, I should be intuitively and strongly drawn towards it, in whose house or hands soever it might be found: and *that* would be the picture which would have most attraction for my heart which bore the strongest resemblance to my beloved parent, although its frame might not be so elegant as that of some others, and it might be in the possession of one whom I did not value so much as my more intimate friends. So let me see the image of God my Father, and Christ my Saviour, whether in the communion of the Church of England or of Rome; in the Methodist, Baptist, or Independent; I love it for the sake of the divine

original, and that portrait I love best which is *most like* the original.

No one, who is in the possession of the New Testament, and has made himself well acquainted with its contents, can be ignorant of the manner in which this love should, and does operate, where it is really possessed. There can exist no mystery here. Affection needs no schooling and lecturing as to modes of action, seasons of manifestation, and means of benefit. It is all heart to feel, all mind to invent, all foot to move, and hand to administer. It may not be amiss, however, to put Christians in remembrance of what they owe to their brethren; to those especially with whom they are associated in the bonds of immediate intercourse and fellowship. They should *avoid all occasions of offence;* repress every look, word, or action, that is in the remotest degree calculated to give pain, and consider their brother's peace of mind as sacred as their own. They should be ever willing, ready, and even forward, *to exercise the most sincere and tender forgiveness.* To be implacable is to be like the devil; to be forgiving is to be like him who prayed for his enemies, and who was no sooner taken down from the cross, than, in a manner, he seemed to be contriving to save them that nailed him to it. But what is this to the consideration how much *he* has forgiven *us?* To forgive a brother his offences ought to be the easiest and most delightful work which a Christian has to perform, considering what an example he has to copy from, and what a motive he professes to feel. It is beautifully said by an American preacher, "As the little children of one family, who often in the course of the day look angrily and feel soured towards one another, yet say, 'good night,' with an affectionate kiss, and in the morning

meet again in love, so should it be the care of the dear children of God to love one another with a pure heart, fervently, and from the heart to forgive every one his brother their trespasses." Another operation of brotherly love is *forbearance* with each other's differences of opinion, infirmities of temper, and weaknesses of faith. Allied to this, is *a disposition to avoid all rash judgments.* Love is not censorious; but is inclined to think well of its object; to diminish, rather than magnify, its faults; and to conceal rather than to publish them. Brotherly love will induce a person to *speak the language of admonition, and to administer reproof;* but in a manner so gentle, so tender, and so humble, that the object of it, unless he be more of a brute than a Christian or a man, in his temper, shall feel that a kindness is done to him, for which there is a demand upon his gratitude and affection. *A tender sympathy* which leads us to bear one another's burdens of care and sorrow, is essential to this love. A sympathy which, not with impertinent curiosity, but with genuine pity, inquires into the cause of another's grief, to relieve it; a sympathy which invites the confidence of the mourner, and draw to its own bosom from his oppressed heart, the secret of the cloud that hangs upon his brow. "Oh! there is something that is wanting in the church here," says the same American preacher, whose expression I have already quoted, "something which shall so bind us together, that when one member suffers, all the members shall suffer with it; when any are in bonds, shall be bound with them: something which shall bring us into a dearer union, and wake up within us a more pure, refined, pervading sympathy, which shall be touched with the feeling of another's infirmities, and vibrate to the chord of wo, which is strong in a

brother's heart." Love will make us *regardful of the wants of our poorer brethren!* "For whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" In these, and in every other way in which we can show our interest in the members of Christ, and our tender regard for their happiness, will brotherly love operate where it exists in reality and in vigour? We may now contemplate, for our edification and quickening, one or two bright specimens of this lovely virtue.

Read the account preserved in the Acts of the Apostles, of the scenes which followed the day of Penticost. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them, about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted to all men as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple; and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with the people."—Acts, ii. 41—47. Beautiful scene! Surprising effects! Where, in all the history of our world was any thing like it, before or since? This *was* love. It seemed intended to show forth at the very origin of Christianity its mighty power to subdue the selfishness of our nature; and to set before all ages and all countries, an illustrious example of this heavenly virtue. I need not ask, where is any thing like this *now*.

Consult the history of the church in subsequent times, and even amidst growing corruptions in other

things, and you will find some bright and lovely exhibition of this spirit of primitive Christianity. In the time of TERTULLIAN, charity was proverbial, and it was said of believers, "SEE HOW THESE CHRISTIANS LOVE ONE ANOTHER;" insomuch, that the heathens, surprised to see a union so affectionate, ascribed it to supernatural causes, and imagined that some mysterious characters, imprinted on their bodies, operated as a charm, and inspired them with love for each other. There *were* mysterious characters, but they were imprinted on the soul, not on the body, and the name and image of Jesus were the charm. LUCIAN, a satirical Greek writer of the second century, satirizing them, passed the highest possible encomiums upon them when he said, "It is incredible what pains and diligence they use by all means to succour one another. They have an extreme *contempt* of the things of this world. Their legislator made them believe that they are all brethren, and since they have renounced our religion, and worshipped their crucified leader, they live according to his laws, and all their riches are common." This is Paganism bearing its testimony at the shrine of Christianity, to the superior excellence of the religion of the Gospel. JULIAN, the apostate, as he is called, paid a fine tribute to Christianity, and its professors of his own times, when, in writing to a heathen priest, he says, "Let us consider that nothing has contributed so much to the progress of the superstition of the Christians, as their charity to strangers. I think we ought to discharge this obligation ourselves. Establish hospitals in every place, for it would be a shame in us to abandon our poor, while the Jews have none. and the impious Galileans (thus he calls the Christians) provide not only for their own poor, but also for ours." O Christianity! this is one of

thy brightest triumphs, when this malignant and subtle foe could find no better way of attacking thee than by imitating thy virtues! EUSEBIUS, an ecclesiastical historian of the fourth century, gives a striking proof of the love of the brethren, in his time, when speaking of a plague which ravaged Egypt, he says, "Many of our brethren, neglecting their own health, through an excess of charity, have brought upon themselves the misfortunes and maladies of others. After they had held in their arms the dying saints, after they had closed their mouths and their eyes, after they had embraced, kissed, washed, and adorned them with their best habits, and carried them on their shoulders to the graves, they have been glad themselves to receive the same kind offices from others, who have imitated their zeal and charity." The acts were, indeed, imprudent and improper, as EUSEBIUS admits; but O, the power of love which induced those acts! And then, as to the care of these early Christians of their poor; of this we have a famous example in the conduct of the Church of Rome, in the earlier and better period of her history. The EMPEROR DECIUS demanded their treasure. A deacon answered for the whole church, and required one day to comply with the order of the tyrant. When the term was expired, he assembled all the blind, and the lame, and the sick, that were supported by the church and pointing to them, told the Emperor, "These are the riches of the church, these its revenue and treasure." Such *were* Christians once, in brotherly love. We have purified ourselves, happily, from many of their errors and superstitions, but have we not, in rubbing off the tinsel of their gaudy decorations, rasped away also some of the more substantial parts of their piety?

Is there much, I say, of *this* kind of love in the church now?

In urging this divine love upon you, I call upon you to dwell upon your own peculiar principles, as *voluntary societies of Christians, united upon the ground of mutual knowledge.* You are not a church formed by law, or associated by the mere circumstance of geographical boundaries, but on the principle of free consent, and on an acquaintance with each other, as those, who in the judgment of charity are partakers of the like precious faith, and the common salvation. Scarcely any churches in existence have such means or motives for brotherly love as yours. You know the sentiments, the character, and even the religious experience of those whom you receive to your communion, for you have heard their confessions. And I do not hesitate for a moment in saying, that I believe there is more pure and practical love among you, than, with one solitary exception, I mean the Moravians, is to be found in any other denomination: and you *ought*, from the circumstances I have mentioned, to have more. But still you have far, far too little. Weigh all the particulars I have enumerated, and say if there is not yet a criminal deficiency amongst us? And what are the causes of this want of love?

The external prosperity of the church, its worldly ease, and unrestricted religious liberty is one cause. In times of persecution the sheep run together; but when the dogs cease to bark, to chase, and to worry them, then they separate and quarrel with one another. Shall we, then, suffer our love to each other to grow cool, because we are at ease in Zion? Is this how we improve our liberty, and tempt God to bind us together by the iron fetters of intolerance?

Professors do not properly consider the subject, nor dwell enough upon the ends of Christian fellowship. It is too little thought of, or too little studied. They do not stir up their hearts to love one another, because they do not properly consider how much they are called to the exercise of this holy and tender affection.

The largeness of some of our churches, might be thought by some to be a cause of the deficiency, and I should think so, if it did not exist in an equal degree in smaller ones. Still, however, it must be admitted, that a body of four, five, or six hundred members scattered over the whole expanse of a large town and neighbourhood, cannot have much opportunity for personal acquaintance, and for the interchange of Christian sympathy. To meet this case, there should be a more numerous eldership than usually exists, and district associations and meetings of the members should be promoted.

I am inclined to think, that the deficiency is in many cases, and in no small measure, to be traced to the pulpit. If the pastor be not a *man* of love, and a *preacher* of love; if he do not both by his sermons and his example, breathe a spirit of affection into his people, and labour to the uttermost to do so, there will be a visible want of this essential feature of church prosperity. It has not been with any of us, perhaps, sufficiently an object to promote the love of the brethren. We have preached doctrines, experience and morality, faith and hope; but has charity, the greatest of the three graces, been sufficiently inculcated?

But after all, the chief causes of the deficiency of love, are still to be mentioned; and these are, *the want of true love to Christ*, and *a selfish worldly mindedness*. If we loved Christ more, we should

inevitably love one another more, since we love them for his sake. If we felt as we ought, his amazing love to *us*, we should love him more fervently in return: and then, as a necessary consequence, we should be more tenderly attached to his people; nor would less worldly-mindedness, more spirituality of mind, fail to be followed with the same effect. The most eminent Christians, are most tenderly disposed towards God's dear children, and Christ's dear saints. A love of riches or of grandeur is a cold and selfish temper; it concentrates a man's attention upon himself, and of course withdraws his affection from the church. The present divided and alienated state of the Christian world in this country, is a plain proof, that notwithstanding the prevalence of evangelical sentiment, love to Christ is by no means so ardent as it appears to be. The rancorous feeling, amounting almost to malignity, with which some professing Christians treat others, cannot comport with a high degree of pure affection to the Lord Jesus.

Permit me, then, to enjoin most earnestly, an attention to this interesting and most important duty, a duty which above many, brings in the performance its own reward. Love is happiness; hatred is misery; and selfish indifference at best midway between both. And now on this subject, alluding to sentiments already touched upon, I would dwell upon the singular emphasis which Christ lays on this duty in the following injunction, "*This is* MY *commandment that ye love one another.*" Every leader of a sect both among the Jews and Heathen, it has been said, had appointed some rite or speculative opinion, the belief or observance of which was the badge of distinction of his followers, and by which they were known to be his disciples. Thus Phari-

sees, Saducees, Platonists, Pythagoreans, and Epicureans, were distinguished from each other. Each had his leading principle, his favourite opinion, to which he was warmly attached, and by which his party was easily known. With allusion to this custom, the Saviour of the world, the Head of the heavenly sect says to *his* followers, "This is *my* commandment that ye love one another; *and by this shall all men know, that ye are my disciples; if ye love one another.*" "I am incarnate love: none have loved like me: I am the type and pattern of love; and you are the objects of my love. If, therefore, you would prove yourselves the disciples of him who came to teach love, and who taught it by his example, you must love as *I* have loved, and must love *whom* I love." Now this injunction and description of our duty is Christ's law, and no wonder that he should attach such emphasis to it, considering the state of his own mind. The laws of an absolute monarch are always expressive of his character: emanating from his own disposition, they bear the impress of his heart, discover the tyrant or the friend, and are manifestations of cruelty or kindness. What, then, might be looked for from Christ, but a law of love; *his* laws for his church came from his heart, and that heart was love. What other king ever gave it as the badge of his subjects, or philosopher of his disciples, that they should love one another? But Christ has.

There is much even in the Christian himself, as the object of our affection, both in what he is, and what he will be, to kindle, call forth, and sustain a pure and exalted flame. That man, amidst all his imperfections, has germs of immortal excellence in his nature, which in the paradise above will grow and thrive for ever. He is an infant seraph, dis-

playing at present the ignorance, and wilfulness, and waywardness of childhood; he thinks as a child, he speaks as a child, he acts as a child, but he is to rise to the manhood of perfect and heavenly virtue, and put away all childish things. He is to be holy as an angel, and to run an endless career of spotless purity. You will see him a perfect saint, yea, a perfect, living, everlasting resemblance of Christ; as perfect as a mirror is of the sun whose dazzling image is reflected from its polished and speckless surface. You will love that man for ever, and see in him every thing worthy of your love. But this is nothing to the other consideration of loving him for God's sake, and Christ's sake. On that man the mind of God was fixed from everlasting ages; towards him the thoughts and affections of the great God were moving from eternity. In him the heart of Jehovah finds its resting-place. That man was in the view of Jesus, when he was contemplating his death, and his salvation was part of the joy that was set before Christ, for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. Out of love to him, the Son of God became incarnate, and it was love which sustained him amidst the scenes of his humiliation. Yes, Christ loved him unto the death of the cross, and loved him *in* death, and loves him *beyond* death, and by all his own love, and all his agonizing method of expressing it, commends him to *our* love. Next to Christ himself, there is not an object in creation we should love as we do a Christian, for he is not only Christ's representative, but he is the object of Christ's love. In that Christian our heart meets Christ's heart. O, what a depth of meaning, and a cogency of argument, and a force of persuasion, is there in that rule and motive of our affection, for it is both, "*As I have loved you.*"

Who but himself can tell how that is? Who can say how Christ has loved his people? We can see the expression, the outward manifestation of it; we can look at the cross; but who can look into the heart? Who can see or understand the love itself? "Jesus Christ was an incarnation of love in our world. He was love living, breathing, speaking, acting amongst men. His birth was the nativity of love; his sermons the words of love; his miracles the wonders of love; his tears the meltings of love; his crucifixion the agonies of love; his resurrection the triumph of love." And yet we are to love one another *as* Christ has loved us. We cannot now feel the full force of this; if we did, we should be unfit for the present world; the love of kin and of country would die away, like culinary flames in the blaze of the orb of day. But this full force *will* be felt in heaven. All the love of kin and of country will have died with the world in which it existed; and we shall see before us not husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, fellow church members, and fellow subjects; but simply objects of Christ's love, who were washed from their sins in his blood, and redeemed by his grace from hell, and who are to be forever loved for his sake. And thus we *shall* love them. Every look of complacency we see him dart upon them, instead of kindling envy, so perfect shall we be in love, will be fresh fuel to the flame of our own pure affection for them. My God, where is this love now? Where do we see any thing like it? Among a thousand other reasons, for a Christian's desiring to depart and be with Christ, one is that he might feel what it is to love, and be loved for his sake: to have the mystery developed, what it is to love Christ perfectly, and perfectly to love all his *saints* for his sake.

If there be any truth in all this, and it be not fiction or rhapsody, yield to the force of it, and open your heart afresh to the brethren. You have never loved them as you ought; nor have you ever been beloved as you have a claim to be. O what a beauty and a power of spiritual excellence, lie hidden in the pages of the New Testament, waiting to be developed in some better age of the church, when the Spirit of God shall be poured out from on high. We can imagine that one of the first acts of the church, when it shall appear on earth, *having the glory of God*, will be to collect the books of ecclesiastical history and consume them to ashes, as if ashamed to know how little the Christians of other ages had loved one another; and having destroyed these records of their disgrace, they will send after them into oblivion, all the angry controversies which for so many ages had seemed to metamorphose the sheep of Christ into wolves, and his doves into vultures. Christians, for the credit of religion, for the honour of your Redeemer, and for the good of the world, seek to recover in full beauty this feature of Christianity, *the love of the brethren*.

I close this chapter with a passage from Mr. Beverley, which I recommend to the serious consideration of all who may read these pages.

"The effects of Messiah's reign are to be something more than decent and comely in society; they are to be wonderful, extraordinary, miraculous,—'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.' The changes that shall take place shall be fundamental. 'Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.'

"But if we think that the church has done her duty, when she has established a standard of sobri-

ety, courtesy, and honesty amongst men, we are grievously mistaken: she has to exhibit to the world all her children as one family, united as one close-knit and vital body, having one spirit and one life; bound together, not in the ties of politeness, but of blood; not in a treaty of civility, but in a family compact of kindred affection. What then are the effects of this mystical union? Precisely that which is now wanting in the churches; that all Christians should find their brethren in Christ really and substantially their friends, protectors, and counsellors, in time of need, distress, and apprehension; and that the church should be a port and refuge to the weary pilgrims, who are sore beset and buffeted with the tempest of adversity.

"Christians are endowed with mighty privileges, and are made partakers of the divine nature, that they might, by the resplendent and godlike virtues of their society, bring back the glory of God upon earth, manifesting him as he has manifested himself to them—the God of love. For if we look upon the earth, out of the precincts of the church, we find it a desolation of selfishness, cruelty, and hardness of heart; a waste howling wilderness of sin and death; a habitation of miserable beings, who, without any choice of their own, have been thrust into life for labour and sorrow, for vanity and vexation of spirit, and whose sad unfriended condition has led many to entertain hard thoughts of the Creator and Ruler of such a world, as if he was, indeed, the evil demiurge of Manichean theology. But Christians, the body of Christ, have received a commission to display the Creator in the majesty and beauty of his second creation; to exalt, by their faith and conversation, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; and to show that the earth may be a second paradise in the light

and glory of the Sun of Righteousness. They have to prove by the lovely operations of the church, that the second creation is the work of the same God, who, being himself essential goodness and benevolence, did, at the first, suffer the plenitude of his felicity to overflow in thousands of channels, receiving from none, but imparting to all the joys and wonders of the first creation; and though an enemy has embittered the channels, and introduced a curse where there was a blessing, and sorrow where there was joy, and sin where there was innocence, and death where there was life; and though the earth is filled with wicked men, who, by their active crimes, plunge their fellow creatures into distress, or with pitiless apathy, pass them by unheeded, when distress is breaking their hearts; yet the church, the nation of ransomed saints, have, in the Gospel, and through the unction that teaches all things, received so excellent a plan for a universal restitution, that if they did but exactly follow that plan, and hearken to the instructions they have received, all evils, excepting disease and death, would disappear from amongst men, and the astonished world, in an acclamation of surprise and gratitude would cry out, 'Behold! again, the God that made all things, and pronounced them to be good.'

"First of all, then, harmony, peace, and perfect friendship must be conspicuous in the church: it must be seen that Christians love one another; that their union is a wonder-working phenomenon, which no wisdom of the world can counterfeit; that the gates of the Christian enclosure open into the sanctuary of love; that a man—that is, Christ in his human nature joined to his brethren, and they in him—is a 'hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest;' that when the storm is raging in

all the world besides, there is peace there: that every believer is the brother of every believer; that they are all concerned in the temporal welfare of their brethren, and all deeply interested in their final and everlasting salvation.

"But is it so at present? alas! let any one who is thoroughly acquainted with the churches give the melancholy answer! There are, indeed, Christian societies wherein the poor are treated with kindness and sympathy; or, in some places, a few of the church-members are united in a pious friendship; and brotherly love, *as far as it extends*, produces happy effects; but, generally speaking, there is a sad distance between the brethren. They know not one another in the bonds of the Gospel; they are estranged by the cold and distant formalities of the ceremonious world; they are either too intent on the pursuit of their own interest, or too deeply embedded in the well-lined nest of opulent selfishness, to care for the labour and the sorrows, the beauty and the edification of the church."

CHAPTER XI.

THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSORS.

AMONGST the various talents with which God has entrusted us, and for the use of which a strict account will be required at the day of judgment, *influence* sustains a very high place. Made for society, and placed in the midst of it, we are always acting upon others, and being acted upon by them: a solemn consideration, which we should never forget for a single hour. This applies universally; we are *all* perpetually sending forth, and receiving influence. Our spheres of operation are of very different dimensions, enlarging, of course, according to the number, publicity, and importance of the relations in which we stand to the social system; but all persons, not excepting the poor widow in an almshouse, have a circle within which they move, and of which they are the centre. Least of all can it be supposed that the professor of religion is without influence. Consider what it is he professes in the way of *privilege;* that he is a member of Christ, a child of God, a candidate for immortality, an heir of glory: in the way of *duty;* that he is a saint, a lover of God, an imitator of Christ, a friend of man, the law of God incarnate, a living comment on the Bible, the religion of the New Testament embodied. Such

a man *must* have influence of some kind. *He*, from the very nature of his character and avowed principles, must be acting upon others for good or for harm. Whoever is negative, it cannot be such a person. Think also of the *kind* of influence he exerts; it is not literary, it is not political, it is not scientific, it is not merely moral—but it is spiritual, it is religious. It is an influence not for time only, but for eternity; not for earth merely, but for heaven or hell. It is an influence which will in some instances go before him into eternity, and in others it will outlive him on earth, and then follow him into his everlasting inheritance of torment or of bliss, in the torment or bliss of those to whose ruin or salvation he has been accessory; he is ever and every where aiding men to perdition or to glory. Whether he intends it or not; whether he considers it or not; he is sending out an influence which either withers or nourishes the interests of immortal souls. How much then does it become him, to consider well his momentous situation, and the account he shall have to render at last for the results of his conduct.

First—I shall consider the influence of professors *upon each other*.

This may be applied either to the members of the same church, to those of different churches of the same denomination, or to those of different denominations. As regards the first, it cannot be questioned or unnoticed, that they act powerfully on each other. The word of God abounds with remarks, precepts, and examples, which imply this. We have the excellences and the faults of the saints set before us, that we may avoid the one and imitate the other: we are called upon to let our light shine before men; to provoke unto love and good works; to do good to all; to edify one another. This reciprocal influ-

ence of professors may be seen exemplified as well as proved, in various points of view; such for instance as the following:

In their spirituality and heavenliness of mind. Religion is not, as you know, a mere round of ceremonies, or a mere set of opinions; it is a state of holy affection, a principle of divine life in the soul; it is faith, hope, love; a minding of the things of the Spirit: righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is evident, therefore, that those who profess it, must be always doing something to raise or depress each other's piety, fanning or damping the flame of each other's divine love. One lively, ardent, active Christian is a blessing to the circle in which he moves, and sometimes to the whole church of which he is a member. His prayers at the meetings for social devotion, and his conversation in the companies of Christian friends, tend not only to stop the spreading lukewarmness of many others, but to kindle a similar spirit to his own in the hearts of those with whom he associates. He keeps up the spiritual atmosphere of the church, and makes it genial and reviving. While on the other hand, one worldly-minded, political, convivial professor, whose spiritual affections, if not wholly extinguished, are smouldering under a heap of earthly cares and tastes, depresses and chills the piety of all who come near him. He is a hinderance to religious conversation, an interruption to the communion of saints, and an extinguisher upon the devotion of a party. However profitable the intercourse of a company may have been before he entered the room, he soon contrives, by anecdote, politics, or business, to turn the current into some low and earthly channel. It is of immense consequence that we should all consider this subject; that we should ask the question of our-

selves, "what would I wish the church to be to which I belong; would I have it resemble that of Philadelphia, which the Lord accused of nothing bad, or that of Laodicea, which he did not praise for any thing good? What I wish the church to be, that by divine grace, will I seek to be myself; for that in fact which *I* am in my spirit and temper, that am I in reality seeking to make the whole body."

It has not, I believe, unfrequently occurred, that young converts in the ardour of their first love, and while much unacquainted as yet, with what is called the religious world, have looked upon the church of Christ as a sacred enclosure, within which dwelt scarcely any other than a kind of heavenly inhabitants; as a sort of vestibule to the temple above, where as these blessed spirits were putting off their earthly affections, and preparing to enter into the presence of their divine Redeemer, they could think or speak of little else than the glory that awaited them; and by whom every addition to their number would be hailed with delight, and welcomed as an accession to the fervour of their piety. In such society, these novices expected soon to attain to the full maturity of the Christian character, and ripen into the greatest perfection attainable on earth. They anticipated the sweetest and holiest intercourse, an almost unearthly spirituality, and an uninterrupted strain of religious conversation in the communion of saints—but alas! what a woful disappointment did the reality produce; in the sacred enclosure they found worldly-minded professors, almost as intent upon things seen and temporal, as any thing they had left without the gates; in the vestibule of heaven, they beheld men and women, covered with the dust, disordered with the anxieties

and given up to the enjoyment of earth. They saw little but the world in conduct, and heard little else in conversation. A cold chill fell upon their hearts, which seemed at once like a frosty atmosphere acting upon a newly-exposed plant, to check the ardour of their religious affections; and even they, lately so fervent, soon sunk and settled down into the lukewarmness of those among whom they had come to dwell. It is true they expected too much; they had formed a standard for the church militant too nearly approaching that of the church triumphant; but still, even persons with a more correct knowledge of professing Christians, and with more sober expectations of what was to be derived from them, have upon coming among them experienced much less of the benefits of fellowship than they expected. This should not be. Happily it is not always thus. In our churches are to be found some, who by their knowledge, piety, and experience, are nursing fathers and mothers of the young Christian, and who, by the blessing of God, breathe into him their own spirit.

Our influence upon each other is very great *in promoting or discouraging an attendance upon the means of grace, especially on week days.* A diligent and constant resort to the house of God, both for hearing the word and social prayer, is of incalculable importance to the spirit of piety. If we would grow in grace, and keep up the principle and exercise of faith, we must avail ourselves of all possible, or at least, attainable helps. An irregular attendant upon these advantages discourages others, lends the influence of his example to dissuade them from going to the place of instruction, and says to them, in effect, "there is no need of so much diligence." Fearful is the injury thus done, and expe-

cially by deacons and leading members, when *they* are inconstant. On the contrary, how influential for good, is he whose place is never vacant, who, as he passes the house of the less regular attendant, says, by his example, "come with us;" and who, as he meets a negligent brother in the street, causes him to turn and accompany him to the house of God.

Our morality is materially affected by each other. I need not say how refined, how pure, how rigid, are the morals of the New Testament, forbidding not only the outward act, but also the inward feeling of sin; commanding not only whatsoever things are true, pure, just and honest, but also whatsoever things are lovely and of good report. A professing Christian should be not only eminent in the church for his piety, but as eminent also in the world for his morality. We should excel the worldling on his own ground; who is apt to boast of his morals, while he sneers at us for our piety. *We*, then, should be above and beyond him, in *this* respect. His summit should be our lowest level; his goal should be our starting place. It is evident, notwithstanding the boast of some, that morals, so far as truth, honesty, and justice are concerned, are at a very low ebb in the world, and I am alarmed and concerned, lest the tide should sink in the church. The loose maxims, and looser practices, of modern trade, are finding their way among professed Christians, and principles are now adopted and acted upon, which, if tested by the word of God, cannot be justified; and yet they extensively prevail. Here again, the reciprocal influence of believers is great, and dangerous. Had the church from the beginning, taken its stand upon the scriptures, and repudiated every thing condemned by that, there would not

have been exhibited in the practices of modern professors, such a mass of questionable conduct as we are often pained to behold. One Christian makes a small deviation from the "whatsoever things are lovely;" another sees it, and goes a step further, to infringe upon the "whatsoever things are of good report;" a third is emboldened by their sanction to neglect the "whatsoever things are true;" and so the matter goes on. Some things are avoided as long as they are confined to the world; but once seen in the church, they are practised under the consideration that if not actually right, they cannot be far wrong, if done by professors. Thus the church goes on lowering the standard of morals, and corrupting itself. A Christian ought to tremble at the idea of venturing one single step beyond the line of propriety, and especially in any new case of commercial casuistry; for there are among his brethren, many waiting first to imitate him, and then to plead his example for going one step farther than he did. Thus he acts the part of JEROBOAM, the son of NEBAT, of whom it is so emphatically and repeatedly said, "he made Israel to sin." One single act of doubtful morality performed by a professing Christian, may be observed by many, and copied by some, who till that time, never questioned its sinfulness; and who, from that moment, felt all the safeguards of their character, all the defences of their integrity give way before the influence of one, whom they had been accustomed to look up to, not only as an older and a wiser, but also a holier Christian than themselves; till at length they went on from one state of delinquency to another, till they made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience together. On the contrary, how noble, how honourable, and how useful is the man, whose stern and steadfast integrity stands

firm amidst the shifting and fluctuating tides of modern commerce, and commercial devices, like a rock against the billows and currents of the ocean. There he is among his brethren, the relic of a juster and more honourable age, the type of what a Christian tradesman should be, and the means of still restraining others prone to wander within the boundaries of truth and honesty.

Nor is our influence upon each other inconsiderable, as regards *zeal* and *liberty*. There are few things to which the remark, that men move more by imitation than conviction, is so applicable as it is to these. "What will others do?" is the question often asked, instead of what *ought I to do?* Let a plan be presented to them of some new effort for extending the Redeemer's kingdom in the world; some fresh and just demand upon the energies and property of his friends, and instead of examining its merits, they scrutinize its supporters—instead of reading the prospectus, they run over the list of contributors—instead of saying to themselves, what ought I to do, they ask the bearer what their neighbours have done. This is a shameful way of supporting God's cause, and yet is is far too extensively prevalent. What responsibility, therefore, does it entail on professors, first to give their names, since names are arguments and recommendations; and next to couple with their names, a liberal and proportionate donation; proportionate to the merits of the cause, and proportionate also to their own station and means of assisting it. Especially does this prove the responsibility of *rich* professors. *Their* contributions fix the scale of donations, and determine, in effect, whether much or little shall be done. They open or close the hearts and hands of the rest; *they* cause the stream of liberality to flow full and

rapidly, or to stagnate; *they*, in many cases, determine whether the scheme shall succeed or fail. There are frequently to be found liberal minds who devise liberal things, but who, on being informed that some richer neighbour had done much less than *they* intended to do, are prevented from fulfilling their own purposes although they know they are within their ability, because it would appear either like ostentation or ambition, to surpass one so much better able to give than themselves; and thus the cause of Christ is doubly robbed, by covetousness on the one hand, and unsanctified modesty on the other. *Away* with such unsanctified modesty: let each man accomplish the desires of his own heart, and obey the dictates of his own conscience, regardless of the conduct of the rich niggard, remembering that his example may work upward, and shame *him* out of his detestable covetousness.

Members of *different churches* of the same order, do each other much good, by cultivating friendly intercourse, by reciprocal interest and sympathy, and by good neighbourhood and co-operation; or much harm by a spirit of alienation and hostility, of envy and jealousy, of detraction and division. Yes, different communities act upon each other, as well as different individuals in the same community; and this not only in the way I have already glanced at, but in many others. The Apostle tells us that even in primitive times, the zeal and liberality of one society provoked another to love and good works; and he actually proposed the example of one church for the imitation of the rest. Every community of Christians has an influence upon others, and an influence of course in the ratio of its magnitude, wealth, and publicity. This is a circumstance which ought to be well and solemnly considered by all large and affu-

ent congregations, whether in London or in the country. They are to the church at large what the places in which they are located are to the empire. The metropolis, other cities, and large towns, give the tone, in a great measure, to the smaller towns and villages. Hence, lukewarmness, worldly-mindedness, and covetousness, in the larger churches, are almost sure to infect others; while their spiritual life, activity, and liberality, are very likely to be communicated to the body, of which they are the greater limbs.

In reference to the reciprocal influence of professors of *different denominations*, far more *might* be said than *can* be said in this chapter. They must and do act upon each other, and that powerfully too. The knowledge and piety, the love and zeal of one section of the Christian church can no more be confined within the pale of its communion, than the air it breathes, or the light it enjoys: nor are the bad influencer of party spirit, sectarian bitterness, and political animosity, more likely to be pent up within the community that indulges them, than the pestilential miasmata of a contagious epidemic within the house where the disease originates. There is a continual action and reaction going on between the different divisions of the Catholic Church. If a revival of piety take place in one, it will, in all probability, extend to others. The Methodists and Dissenters were doubtless the means of kindling the flame of evangelical religion in the Church of England; and it may be hoped that the flame of piety which is now spreading in the Church of England will react upon its source, and cause that to burn with still greater intensity. It ought to be felt by each party to be a solemn obligation to promote the spirit of pure and undefiled religion, not only for its own sake, but for

the sake of all. Our books, our examples, the records of our zeal and liberality overleap the boundaries of party, and circulate amongst each other in spite of prejudice and bigotry; I say in spite of prejudice and bigotry, for such bigotry there is, of which I have myself been the object. God has honoured me by enabling me to write a little work—"The Anxious Inquirer,"—which, in his infinite condescension, he has blessed to an extent which fills me with astonishment and gratitude. It has obtained favour in the eyes of many, very many pious clergymen of the Church of England, from some of whom I have received testimonies to its usefulness, as honourable to their candour as they are gratifying to my heart. Such men, intent upon the objects of their high and holy calling, and willing, by any proper means, to save souls, have not scrupled to avail themselves of an instrument which they thought was made ready to their hands, though constructed by a Dissenter. Not so, however, with all, for instances have come to my knowledge of *evangelical* clergymen, having acknowledged the useful tendency of this book, and yet refused to circulate it, because of the author's name on the title page. In one case of this kind, a lady was so much hurt by its being refused admission into a religious library, that she immediately purchased a considerable number for circulation. I know not whether I ought to make such a concession to bigotry, as the suppression of my name, but if it would at all aid the usefulness by extending the circulation of the book, I should, perhaps, consent to the Tract Society's doing so, to whom it now belongs. I can, I believe, most unhesitatingly declare, on behalf of the body to which I belong, that they are entire strangers to the feeling which would lead them to refuse to circulate any *useful* book, because it

bears the name of a churchman. As regards the prejudice against myself, for such prejudice I do know exists in some quarters, I can descend to nothing servile, nothing mean, nothing below what becomes a man, or a Christian, to remove it; remembering what was once said by a bishop of the Church of England, "that prejudice has neither eyes nor ears." I *am* a Dissenter; nor would I give up my principles for the wealth that all the endowed churces in Christendom have to offer: and I have *written* for the cause of dissent; not, however, from factious motives, in a rancorous spirit, or with a reviling pen. What I have written is in existence, and still in circulation, and let any man show me a sentence which is contrary to charity or courtesy, and I will blot it from my page. In one instance, and which was the principal cause of the prejudice against me, in certain quarters, I was not merely misunderstood, but *grossly and wickedly misrepresented*, and made to say the *very reverse* of what I did say. Instead of affirming, as was reported, "that we ought to forget our Christianity in our dissent:" I actually said that we ought *not* to do so! How much of the bad feeling which now exists between different religious parties is to be traced up to *some* of the organs of public opinion. Let us, however, not carry our antipathies, if any exist, so far as to refuse the circulation of each other's useful books; for this is worse than exclusive dealing, and is deliberately to abandon the church of Christ at large to the ruthless havoc of party spirit, unchecked by one of the most likely means to preserve from utter extinction, the last embers of expiring charity.

Wherever and on whomsoever God bestows his gifts and graces, he intends them as the common blessings of the church; and it is impossible for pre-

judice and bigotry altogether to restrain or resist their influence. We get good in some cases, unconsciously to ourselves, from the very men whom we oppose; just as we should catch a sweet and rich perfume with which an individual might be scented with whom we wrestled. The lamp that lights my neighbour's house, though he be an enemy, lends its friendly illumination to mine. There is a communion of spiritual benefits where there can be none of persons. I want a greater revival of religion amongst the Dissenters, that it might do good to the Church of England; and I want a greater revival of it in the Church of England, that it may do good to the Dissenters; I want it in the Methodists, to do good to both the others, and in both the others to do good to the Methodists. Wherever it begins, it will not, cannot stop. The Spirit of God will not be limited by our narrow views and selfish policy, but will make us blessings to each other, in spite of ourselves.

On the other hand, if benefits be communicative, so is evil; and if, in one way, the different sections of the church of Christ are doing each other good; they are in another doing each other great harm. They are provoking each other to love and good works, as their different religious institutions can testify; but they are also provoking each other to strife, contention and enmity, as their controversies and periodicals bear witness. Never was the warfare of *brethren* so fierce and so rancorous as it is now. Their tongues are sharp swords, and their pens are spears. One party is attacking what they believe to be a corrupt *system;* the other in defending it, are reviling the *men* that are engaged in the assault. The conflict cannot yet terminate, for it is for truth; but still it should be carried on in the

spirit of love. We must still contend, for neither party dare quit the field, but let it be like Michael the Archangel, who, when contending even with the devil about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, "the Lord rebuke thee." Let the accuser, and reviler, and defamer of his brethren, remember this; and like the serpent who is fabled to spit out her venom before she drinks, cast away the poison of his malice, and *then* drink of the water of Christian controversy. Let the religious incendiaries of all parties, whose tongues are set on fire of hell remember this, and consider, that like other incendiaries, they have no power to stop the flames they have kindled, which may not only consume their neighbour's homestead, but reach their own. Every hot, turbulent, and defamatory professor, though not a preacher, or a writer, but only a talker, is a mischief-maker in the church, who not only does what in him lies to drive away charity from his own party, but also to expel it from that of his opponents. He is an enemy to all churches, by the manner in which he defends his own; and by offering up love in sacrifice, at the shrine of what he calls truth, destroys one-half, and that the better half, of what is worth contending for in Christianity. He provokes others to join him in destroying that holy, heavenly temper, which is of infinitely greater value than all the forms of polity, and all the ceremonies ever devised by man, or ever instituted by God; which these forms and ceremonies were granted and designed to promote; and which shall survive and flourish, infinite ages after they have ceased to be remembered.

I have my opinion, of course, where the most active cause, and the chief blame of this unhappy state of things are to be found, but as I would not add one

particle of inflammable matter to the unholy fire, which is raging like a conflagration, I shall abstain from uttering my convictions. I cannot, however, forbear to express my persuasion, that a great part of the anger that is felt by one of the parties, is produced by an entire misconception of the object of the others; I would not aver, that either of the parties is without *all* blame, but I cannot think that in this respect they are both equal. O for a truce to every thing but dispassionate argument, and the charitable use of those methods for obtaining the redress of grievances, which the constitution puts within our reach! When shall that sweet and holy voice be heard throughout the land, which, learning its melody, and borrowing its theme from the angel's song, has called the church to unity of spirit, in notes, which He who came to give peace on earth must approve, as the echo of his natal anthem? When shall that dear servant of his Master, whom so many admire, and so few imitate, find that by his heavenly music, he has tamed the fierceness of bigotry, and exorcised the evil spirit of intolerance? "O God, do thou in thy great mercy to thy distracted church, bless the circulation, even as I believe thou didst help the composition of that invaluable tract." I scarcely need say, I refer to the Reverend BAPTIST NOEL'S tract, entitled, "The Unity of the Church."

Such, then, is the influence of professors on each other; a subject, I am persuaded, too little, far too little considered. We have seen the necessity, and felt the importance of converting the world; but have we seen the necessity, and felt the importance of improving the church? We have been engaged to extend Christianity abroad; but have we been brought to refine and exalt it at home? We have acknowledged the claims that aliens have had upon

us, but have we not withheld ourselves from our brethren? Is the church the better or the worse for us? Have we done it good or harm by our union with it? Have we increased the fervour of its piety, or added to its lukewarmness? Have we raised or depressed the standard of morality? Have we drawn our fellow Christians to the sanctuary, or led them away? Have we warned or paralyzed the zeal of others; expanded or contracted their liberality? We have been doing *something*. We have stood neither idle or neutral. Our fellow professors are either better or worse for our association with them. What has been, will be. We shall still continue to send out influence, and receive it too. May we therefore consider well our situation and our obligations.

SECONDLY.—But I now go on to consider the influence of Professors upon their FAMILIES.

The power of influence is regulated by three circumstances. By the opportunity which those over whom it is exerted have of observing us; by the affection they bear to us, and the habit which they have acquired of looking up to us for imitation. What, then, must be the influence of *parents?* Their children are almost continually with them; they are seen by them in nearly all they do, in their habitual conduct, and in the undress of their character at home. When they little reflect upon it, they are heard in what they say, seen in what they do, studied in their various phases of behaviour, by ears, and eyes, and minds, that are scarcely ever closed. Affection prepares the child to receive impressions from paternal conduct; it warms the heart, and makes it soft and ductile to a father's or a mother's hand. And then, whom has the child been taught to regard with reverence and imitation but his pa-

rents? Their plastic influence has been moulding him from the dawn of reason. He knew them first, and sees them most, and loves them best, and therefore is likely to yield to them with deepest submission. What, then, ought to be the behaviour at home of a professing Christian? It is not my design to enter at large into the subject and plan of a religious education; I would merely say, that the whole cultivation, and direction, and management of a child's mind, from the very dawn of reason, and the development of moral emotions, should be carried on with special reference to the formation of religious character. This should be *the one thing*, in reference to his children, of every professor, to which all other things should be subordinate and subsidiary. Schools, business, situations, preceptors, all should be selected with reference to this. There should be no doubt about this matter, no hesitation nor stopping in this course.

But I now refer more particularly to the silent influence of parental conduct; and it is an undoubted fact, that this is far greater, either for good or for evil, than most parents are aware of. They teach by what they say, they influence by what they do, and also by what they do *not* say, and do *not* perform. The father, who, in the best sense of the word, is the prophet, priest, and king of his family; and the mother, whose piety is as warm and as consistent as her affection; this godly couple, who embody a meek, benevolent, ardent, and consistent religion in their character; who are known by their piety to be saints, as well as felt to be parents, exert an influence over the minds of their children, not to be calculated by numbers, or described in language. But oh! the dreadful contrast in the case of those whose unsanctified tempers, worldly associations,

gay and extravagant parties, political antipathies, trifling conversation, and want of all seriousness and spirituality, often lead their children and servants to ask the question wherein their father and master differ from those who make no profession at all. Oh! what can be expected from such parents, but children that regard religion with insufferable disgust? When surprise is expressed by children at their parents being church members, we may be very sure that they ought not to be such; but should it be their conviction and testimony, that if there be a Christian in the world, their father is one, we may be tolerably sure they are right. Every man is best known at home, and if he has established a belief in all who know him there, that he is a Christian, it is a strong presumption that he is sincere and consistent. He *may* be a hypocrite, but it is not probable, for the disguise of hypocrisy is rarely worn at home; it is the great coat for the character, to be hung up for use when he goes abroad, but which is to be taken off on his return to the bosom of his family.

I knew a gentleman, and I have alluded to the fact in another of my works,* whose history furnished a striking proof and illustration of the power of parental influence. His father was a professor of eminent piety. The son, when a youth, was worldly, though not vicious; he disliked the restraints of religion, which were imposed upon him under the parental roof, and wished to be free from the obligations of piety altogether. His easiest way was to persuade himself that religion was but a name, and that all who made a profession of it, were hypocrites.

* "The Family Monitor; or a Help to Domestic Happiness."

He was determined to test the subject by the conduct of his father. He knew him to be esteemed a saint above most saints; he resolved, therefore, to watch him most closely, with the resolution, that if by reason of any inconsistency, he saw ground to doubt his sincerity, he should conclude that religion was all gross delusion, for if his father was a hypocrite, all others must be so. He began the scrutiny almost with a wish to find some evidence on his own side, but after a microscopic examination, nothing could he find in the smallest degree at variance with the good man's profession. The result was, that it had a favourable influence upon his own mind, and led to a decision in favour of true godliness, and he became an eminent Christian. He was a magistrate, a man of unusual power of mind; a public blessing to the large town in which he lived; and equally distinguished for the extent of his knowledge, and his talents as a public speaker. *Here was the influence of professors at home.*

Let parents consider this and weigh it well. It is a momentous subject. They are ever doing something to prepossess their children in favour of religion, or to prejudice them against it; doing something to draw them into the church, or to drive them into the world: lending a helping hand to lead them to heaven, or to guide them to hell. What tone of expostulation is deep enough or tender enough, to address to those who are inconsistent, on such a subject as this? What note of alarm is loud enough, or startling enough to sound in their ears? Where, oh! where shall be found arrows sharp or barbed enough to pierce their hearts? Is it not sufficient that your influence is ruining the souls of those that have no connexion with you, but you must also employ it to send your *children* to perdition? Oh! tremble at

the interview you must have with them at the day of judgment, and the intercourse you must hold with them for ever in the bottomless pit ! !

THIRDLY.—I now dwell upon the influence of professors *on the world*. This is both direct and indirect; intentional, or involuntary. By the former, I mean that which is concentrated in schemes, efforts, and societies to do good to all men either for their temporal or spiritual welfare. Professing Christians are to bless the world by their prayers, their property, and their energies. Who is to illuminate the dark places of the earth, to convert Pagans, Mahomedans, and Jews; to set up the kingdom of Christ on earth; but the church? We who profess Christ are to make him known. Ours is the awful responsibility to have been put in trust with the Gospel. Every Christian's heart ought to contain a spring of blessing to the world, and what an influence *is* continually going forth from Zion, to change, and it *will* ultimately change, the moral and spiritual state of the whole earth.

But I now more particularly allude to the silent and indirect influence of example and conduct; and this is really so great either for the injury or benefit of others, that every one ought to tremble for himself. Our responsibility on this ground, is truly awful. Multitudes have staked the credit, and even the truth of religion, on the conduct of its professors. This, I admit, is not fair, since God has given it evidences of its own, apart from this. The Bible is true, whosoever may prove false. But many will not go to the proofs of Christianity to ascertain its truth, but will do that which is at once more easy and more congenial with the enmity of the heart against God, they will go to the misconduct of Christians, to demonstrate its falsehood. Infidelity sharpens its

sword and points its arrows on the stones of stumbling cast in its way by men that call themselves believers. Its arguments would be dull and pointless, but for this. Minds that cannot comprehend the subtleties of HUME'S argument on miracles, can feel the taunts and sneers of GIBBON against the follies and misconduct of Christians. But apart from infidelity, many receive a prejudice from such sources, who take no trouble at all about the question of the *truth* of religion: it is enough to satisfy them that it does not make its professors better than their neighbours; and they resolve to let it alone. Inconsistent professors, therefore, are the abettors of infidelity, of profanity, and irreligion; they are mere caricatures of piety, which they represent with hideous and distorted features, and commend to the ridicule and disgust of those who are already ill-disposed towards it; they are traitors in the camp, and betray the cause which they profess to defend; they are destroyers of other men's souls, while avowedly seeking the salvation of their own. No sins have so much power to do mischief as theirs; and none have been so successful and so destructive. Hell swarms with souls whom inconsistent professors have hurried on to perdition.

If a professor of religion be known, and acknowledged, and reported to be a man that never fails to make a hard bargain, always saying of an article he wishes to purchase, "'t is naught, 't is naught," depreciating its value that he may diminish its price, and never content until he has got it into his possession under the market value; if he has thus acquired the discredit of a selfish, screwing, higgling disposition; if he make all sorts of pretexts, and all kinds of equivocation to induce a seller to favour him in the buying; if he be one whom his neighbours do

not wish to deal with, if they can get another customer, and whom they feel a reluctance to have any transactions with, because of his artful, overreaching tricks; if he has the reputation either of a "sharp one," or a "hard one," then his influence upon the worldly part of the community is decidedly and unquestionably bad. It is not required that he should be regardless of his own interests, invite oppression, and surrender himself a victim into the fangs of sharpers to be torn to pieces and devoured. Such weakness exerts no influence in favour of piety, but would exhibit it in the contemptible form of a silly dotard. It is intelligence, sagacity, and firmness, combined not only with honesty, but with honour, generosity, and integrity, and which is able to detect and resist imposition; which knows and defends its own rights, but cannot allow itself even to seem to make an encroachment on the rights of others, and which makes a man desirable as one to transact with; it is this that gives to a Christian influence of the best kind in his intercourse with the world. But even this high-toned excellence, must be associated with an unostentatious, unobtrusive humility. A forward, pushing, ambitious man, whatever may be his honour in the transactions of business, will diminish the beauty and lessen the force of his Christian profession. I shall recur to this subject again, when I speak of the professor in prosperity, and pass on to mention another virtue necessary to give to the Christian a right influence upon society in favour of religion; and that is, a *transparency of character*, an unstudied artlessness of conduct. Men must be quite sure that they hear his *heart* speaking through his lips. There must be nothing which makes them suspect him; nothing which makes them say, "*he is a deep one;*" nothing

which compels them to look cautiously behind him to see what he conceals in his shadow: this would strip him of all his influence, except it be an influence to produce a prejudice against religion. It is also of importance that a Christian should, if his circumstances allow it, be willing to co-operate with his fellow-townsmen in all the local institutions that may exist in the place for the instruction of ignorance or the relief of misery. In reference to these things, he should be a public man, though not of course to such an extent as to interrupt his attention to business; an extreme into which some have fallen. His exertions in this way should, like all other parts of his conduct, bear the impress of his piety, and make his influence to be felt, as a man that fears God. All who see him should perceive that he is guided in his actions by conscience, and not by a regard to favouritism, party, or self-will.

Happily we can speak of many of this kind of professors, who exert only a good influence. Yes, millions, notwithstanding the imperfections which cleave to human nature in its best estate, have been the witnesses for God's religion in the world, and have borne a testimony for its holy and benevolent nature, before which the demon spirit of infidelity has stood abashed, like Satan in the presence of Ithuriel, and felt how awful goodness is. The faith, and patience, and holiness of the saints are one of God's ordinances for the conversion of sinners, and it is an ordinance that has been greatly blessed. The beauties of holiness displayed in all their symmetry and harmony, as they are embodied in the character of eminent Christians, have been employed by the Spirit of God to soften prejudice, and subdue enmity; and they who turned with disgust from religion as it was seen disfigured and deformed

in some inconsistent church member, have, by a more pure and lovely manifestation of it, been charmed into admiration, affection, and imitation.

Hence, then, a professor, go where he may, do what he may, and transact with whom he may, is sending out an influence for or against true piety. In his intercourse with men of business, in his conferences with his fellow-townsmen, in his conduct in the social party, in his behaviour to his servants, in his spirit in the pursuits of commerce, and in his temper towards his friends, strangers, or enemies, he is acting out his principles, or opposing them; sustaining or abandoning his character; walking worthy or unworthy of his calling; and raising or sinking the credit of true religion. He is adding to the attractions of the cross, or to its accidental repulsions; is gathering out the stones from the way that leads to it, or making its avenues more difficult. His influence never ceases, and is never confined. He is not, cannot be neutral. Whatever road he takes, whether that of consistency or inconsistency, he must, to a certain extent, draw others with him. His, if he perish, will not be the privilege of perishing alone; nor will it be his lament, if he be saved, that he has had no influence in saving others. Through all time he is exerting influence, and through all eternity he will be calculating its results; it goes forth from him unseen on earth, to be collected in enduring forms of happiness in heaven, or of torment in hell. Professors! never in any place, nor in any company, nor for one hour, forget your influence!!

CHAPTER XII.

ICT OF PROFESSORS TOWARDS UNCONVERTED RELATIVES.

WILL take you, one of a city and two of a family, ring you to Zion."—Jer. iii. 14. So spake o the Jews. "One shall be taken and the left." So spake Jesus to his disciples: and e both sayings continually verified in the history s Christian church, and the experience of the s people. How rarely does it happen that a family are believers; how commonly is it the hat one or two are called, and the rest left. hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. equently most Christians are placed in near xion with some who are yet in an unregenerate which, of course, greatly increases the difficulty intaining a profession with consistency, and yet same time increases the obligation to do so. uld be much easier to carry on our religious , surrounded by those who would uphold and rage us by their example, their prayers, their s, and their counsel; but, generally speaking, re called to maintain our principles amidst those hom they are opposed. Some have unconverted nds, others wives; some have irreligious ren, others parents; some have ungodly bro-, others sisters; some have wicked masters, s servants.

First.—I shall state some *general duties*, which belong to all alike.

Persons thus situated should be deeply impressed with the conviction that they are placed in circumstances of difficulty, delicacy, and danger, which will require great caution, circumspection, and prudence. You have a most arduous part to act, so as not to lose your own piety on the one hand, nor unnecessarily to disgust your friends with it on the other. You need a "spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and of might, of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, that you may be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Not only would every thing sinful do much harm, but every thing imprudent. A want of judgment would be mischievous, as well as a want of integrity. A good action out of season, or out of place, or done in a wrong manner, would be attended with consequences almost as injurious as a bad one. To combine a due regard to our own consistency, with a spirit of prudence towards the prejudices of others, is a most rare accomplishment. Not to allow our firmness to assume the character of obstinacy or uncommanded scrupulosity in one extreme, nor our caution to degenerate into cowardice or compromise in the other, requires no ordinary measure of grace; but God has promised to make his grace sufficient, even for this. The confidence of faith, united with fervent prayer, and the spirit of dependance, will bring to you from above the necessary assistance.

It is of the last importance that you should see and feel your need of *unbending firmness* in all things required by God. In matters of absolute indifference, or of mere taste and feeling, you should be pliant as an osier, but in matters of principle, inflexible as an oak. It will be the great object of

your unconverted relatives, to subdue your constancy, and to induce you to change your course; and they will seek to accomplish this object, not by asking you to throw off your profession all at once, but by tempting you from time to time, to engage in practices inconsistent with it. They will insinuate that you are unnecessarily rigid, even when tried by your own standard; they will point to some worldly-minded, inconsistent member of your own church, who ventures, without scruple, upon what you refuse to do; they will assure you that it is but that once, or in that one thing, that they ask a concession; they will sometimes affectionately entreat, at others angrily demand; they will ridicule or threaten, as they think they are most likely to succeed; they will promise to conform to some of your religious practices, if you will only conform to some of theirs, to which you object. Against all these attempts to bend your purpose, or shake your constancy, or destroy your consistency, you must be fortified by a holy resoluteness of purpose, and a simple dependance on Divine grace. "None of these things move me," must be your determination. One concession would only lead to another, till all is relinquished which your profession implies. A calm, determined firmness at first, will save you from much annoyance and perplexity.

This unyielding firmness, in reference to what you deem to be your duty, must be maintained, at the same time, with much *sweetness of temper*, and amiableness of disposition. It must be the inflexibility of principle, sustained by the gentleness of love. A professor who has to hold fast his religion, in opposition to his nearest friends, should be the very model of meekness, kindness, and courtesy in every thing else; this will convince them that

his constancy is the dictate of a tender conscience, and not the caprice of a pugnacious disposition.

There should be the most *entire and unvarying consistency*, and an untiring perseverance. Take care that there is nothing which may justly lead to a doubt of your sincerity, or that would fasten upon you the charge, or even the suspicion of hypocrisy. This would create inexpressible disgust. The spectators of your conduct must be the vouchers for your sincerity, and be compelled to testify, that you are, at any rate, self-consistent. Their eyes are ever upon you, with a predisposition to criminate you, in matters of obvious, or even doubtful wrong. They try you by your profession; and by what other standard *should* they try you? I would enforce upon your special attention the consideration, that your religion must not be, nor *appear* to be, an abstract thing, a habit distinct and separable from your social character, but that which is a part of it, binding all into unity, symmetry, and beauty. It must not float by itself upon the surface, like oil on water, refusing to blend, but must be held in solution, like sugar in the cup, sweetening the whole. You must let it make you conscientious in common things, as well as devotional in sacred ones; you must not only be more righteous than your neighbour, but more meek, gentle, kind, and just. You must not only be fitted, by your piety, for communion with the members of the church, but by your social excellence for intercourse with the members of the family. Any want of consistency, will sharpen the stings and increase the venom with which your unconverted friends will annoy you; while an opposite line of conduct will, in many cases, put an end to hostility, even where it does not conciliate regard.

It is also of great consequence, that you should

present religion to your friends under an aspect of cheerfulness. It should be clearly seen by them that it makes you as happy as it makes you holy. Remember, their opinion of it is, that though it may lead to heaven hereafter, it is little better than penance here; and that, admitting it conducts to realms of light and glory, it is by a path gloomy as the valley of the shadow of death. Many real Christians, by their sombre looks, their monkish stiffness, and lugubrious wailings, have confirmed this prejudice. On the contrary, take care to let them see, by your holy, serious cheerfulness, that the kingdom of God is not only righteousness, but peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Let them see you going on your way rejoicing. Convince them that you can take pleasure in all that is innocently pleasant; that you can smile with those that smile on whatever is purely delightful; that you can enjoy with as keen a relish as they can, friendship, scenery, literature, science, and the fine arts; that your aim is only to defecate earthly pleasures of whatever is polluting and deleterious, and to add to them the more holy, solid, and satisfying delights of religion, the joy of faith, hope, and love. Let it be seen that you are walking in the light of God's countenance, and that your spirit dwells in a Goshen compared with which *their* state of mind is but as Egyptian night. This is the way to allure them to piety as well as to abate their unkindly disposition towards you.

As much as possible avoid all uncouth phraseology, and what may be called religious slang. Do not deal in cant terms or phrases, nor apply scripture expressions, in a way of half seriousness, half joke, to ungodly persons. I do not mean by this that you are to avoid altogether the use of religious terms, or the quotation of scripture language; but to encumber

and disfigure our ordinary discourse with the words and phrases of the old divines, or of systematic and experimental theology; to interject our speech with habitual references to the Lord, and the "Lord's will," and "the Lord's people," till it sounds either ludicrous or irreverent, or both, is letting our "good be evil spoken of," and strengthening prejudice against piety.

In whatever attempts you make for the conversion of unrenewed relations, act with great judgment. In many cases more can be done by the silent influence of a holy example, than by instruction, admonition, or rebuke. Superiors will not often allow inferiors to admonish them. The proud heart of man refuses reproof from any one, especially from one below him. With all persons example must be the chief instrument of usefulness to unconverted relatives, and with some, it must be the only one. Even where we *are* authorized to admonish and to warn, great discretion is necessary to do it in the best manner, lest we disgust where we intend to benefit. If we would do good we must be kind, gentle, and affectionate; we must not use a cold, harsh, scolding, or unfeeling tone, nor affect a magisterial or dogmatical manner; but must employ the meekness of wisdom and tenderness of love. We must not dash religion in a person's face, nor pour it down their throat with a drenching force, but insinuate it into their minds, little by little, as tenderly and judiciously as we would medicine into the lips of a sick child, or food into the mouth of a starving man. We must watch for our opportunity, choose the best time and the best circumstances, and especially remember not to be always boring the objects of our solicitude, with a kind of dunning importunity. We must well consider the temper and disposition of the person

whom we are anxious to convert, and adapt our methods to his turn of mind; some will hear a whole lecture from us, others will scarcely bear a hint: some should be alarmed by the thunders of divine vengeance, others moved by the soft music of love's inviting voice: some must be reasoned with, others melted by appeals to the feelings: some will bear at one time what they will not at another; we must, therefore, like a wise physician, study well the case, and adapt our treatment to its peculiarity. Two things, however, must be remembered in all cases; to do every thing lovingly, and to do every thing prayerfully; for who can open and change the heart but God?

It may be, that in some cases, you will be called to suffer persecution, and that of the most painful kind, the unkind treatment of near relatives; and thus to experience the truth of our Lord's words, "I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."—Matthew, x. 34—36. If this be the case, turn at once and continually, for consolation, to the antidote which Christ has provided for this deep sorrow. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven."—Matthew, v. 10. It is to this state of things the Apostle refers, where he says, "Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations, (or *trials.*)"—James, i. 2. Do not be cast down nor faint under your afflictions. They are not for the present "joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards, they yield the peaceable fruit of righteous-

ness." "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." No seed that can be sown on earth, will yield such a produce of heavenly joy, as the tears of God's persecuted people. *These* are the light afflictions which are but for a moment, and which work out "the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Comfort, then, ye troubled ones, comfort your hearts; your crown of thorns, like that of your persecuted Lord, shall soon be exchanged for a crown of glory; and the cross under which you are ready to sink, be changed for a throne from which you shall never descend. Bear your troubles in the spirit of meekness; seek for grace to be neither irritated nor sullen; return not railing for railing, but blessing for cursing. Conquer, or at any rate, soften, hostility by gentleness and passive courage. Smile with love upon the countenance that frowns upon you; and kiss the hand that smites you. Let not the length or violence of oppression induce you to give up your principles. Take heed against an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. Endeavour so to act, as that they who dislike your religion, may "find nothing against you, but as touching the law of your God." Be firm, consistent, mild, judicious, and affectionate; and then God will not only support you under persecution, but give you honour in the midst of it.

SECONDLY.—I now lay down some directions, which are specially applicable to the various relations of social life.

1. Take that of *husband and wife.*

If the former be a professor and the latter not, let him rather increase than abate the tenderness and affection of conjugal love. He has need of great watchfulness and prayer on his own account, that *his* wife's want of piety may not diminish his own,

and that the defects and blemishes of that, may not be such as to prevent hers. How careful must he be not to have family devotion hindered by her disinclination; and how diligent must he be to make up for her deficiencies in the religious instruction of his children. How much grace will he need to maintain his own influence, and yet not in any way teach his offspring to disesteem their mother, or make her feel that she is lowered in their estimation or his, by her want of piety. Let it be his endeavour to win her to Christ by every attention to her comfort and influence, and to make her feel that he still tenderly loves her as a wife, though he cannot yet consider her as a decided Christian.

If, on the other hand, it is the wife who is a professor and the husband not, this is, perhaps, a more difficult and delicate position to maintain with propriety than even the other. In this case she must be anxious and watchful not to allow even the appearance of an air of conscious superiority, much less of the contempt which says "stand by, I am holier than thou." There must be an augmented humility and meekness; an increased tenderness and devotedness towards her husband; a most exemplary attention to his comfort, and that of the family: in short, *the good wife and mother*, must be seen in intimate union with the good Christian; and the former must evidently appear improved and sustained by the latter. She must never reproach him for his want of religion; never talk *at* him before his face, nor talk *against* him, behind his back. Upon her will devolve the religious instruction of the children and servants, which she must sacredly maintain, but still in a way as little offensive as possible to him. How beautiful is the advice given by

the apostle to females in these circumstances—1 Peter, iii, 1—6.

2. *Parents and children.*

If the former are professors, how uniform and consistent should be their piety, that their children should receive no disgust against religion by what they see in them; how anxious should they be, and appear to be, to bring them up in the fear of God, selecting their schools, and their situations with direct reference to this object; how firmly and yet how mildly should they maintain all the religious laws, customs, and habits of their household, against the wishes, or the encroachments of their children's irreligion; with how much of gentleness and firmness as opposed to stern severity on the one hand, and to ruinous indulgence on the other, should they maintain the household discipline; and thus adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

But in some cases divine grace has called the children, and passed over the parents; and where it is so, there requires great solicitude, that their piety towards God, be not abused to encourage and justify a want of piety towards their parents. It will not only not recommend religion, but will excite great disgust towards it, if they see that it has abated aught of that dutiful obedience, respect and honour towards them, which nature dictates, the word of God enjoins, and which they before conversion had been accustomed to render. A greater reproach cannot possibly rest upon young persons, than for a father or a mother to say, "Yes, they are very religious in their way, but their religion has spoiled them as children, for they seem to take a license to disesteem, neglect, and disobey me because they consider me unconverted." On the contrary, what a beautiful and powerful testimony to the excellence

of religion is it to hear a parent say, "I was living in entire neglect, and utter ignorance of religion, till I beheld it exemplified in its loveliest forms in the conduct of my dear child. *I saw* her earnestness, her diligence, her holiness, and I *felt* her dutifulness, her kindness, and her tender, yet respectful solicitude towards myself. From the time she became a Christian, her conduct, never very disobedient, was marked by more attention than ever. She has sometimes ventured to expostulate with me on my neglect of religion, but it was always with such reverence, such diffidence, and affection, that it was impossible to be offended: so that by the grace of God, I may say her piety towards me has been the blessed means of mine towards God." Young people behold your rule and pattern.

3. *Brothers and sisters* are sometimes divided by a difference of religious taste. In such a case those who make a profession should be solicitous by the most assiduous, ingenious and watchful attention and affection, to conciliate the regards and to win the confidence of the others. They should with kindness and humility admonish them, and when from home address them by letter; they should select and recommend suitable books to them; join with them in all their innocent pursuits and tastes; avoid all appearance of shunning their society even for religious associates; and make them feel that piety has strengthened the fraternal bond. Sisters, by many little ingenious works of the needle, the pencil, and the pen; by laying themselves out to meet the wishes, and promote the comfort of unconverted brothers, may be able to endear themselves by the varied devices of genuine love, to those hearts which they should be anxious and watchful to win to Christ. While brothers, by all those kind, delicate, and po-

lite attentions to sisters yet unacquainted with the power of religion, which females expect as due to their sex; by paying those attentions not only in the seclusion of the domestic circle, but in the publicity of social life; by being in every sense of the word, good brothers, as well as good Christians, may do much, very much, by the blessing of God, in awakening an interest for religion in the minds of those who are so nearly related to them.

4. *Masters and mistresses* making a profession, are under solemn obligations, not only to be *just* towards their servants in paying their wages, but to err rather on the side of being too generous, than too rigid, in the *amount* of their wages. There must be a merciful attention to their comfort, in not exacting too much work, in not wearying them by incessant and angry complaints; in speaking kindly to them, and providing suitable and sufficient food and medical attendance in their sickness. There should be a due regard to their spiritual welfare, not only by calling them to family prayer, morning and evening, but by releasing them from all unnecessary labour on the Sabbath, by giving them ample opportunity for attending on public worship, and by privately instructing them in the principles of religion. Those professors, who have not by their conduct, compelled their servants to say, "I have a truly religious master and mistress, who are kindly anxious for my comfort in this world, and still more so for my salvation in the world to come," cannot be acting consistently; there is something wanting.

Religious servants who are placed in families which make no profession, are called to a situation of equal difficulty and importance. In not a few instances they have been remotely or directly the means of converting their employers; and piety has

thus ascended from the kitchen to the parlour. But this has never happened but where the piety of the servant was eminently consistent, uniform, and conspicuous. Some persons in this condition have, it must be admitted, so disgusted their masters and mistresses, by their consequential airs, their troublesome and angry clamour about their religious privileges, and neglect of their proper duties in order to enjoy these privileges, that they have really resolved never again to employ religious servants. It is when piety makes a servant doubly diligent, dutiful, kind, neat, honest and devoted, and secures a testimony from her employer, that her piety is thus influential, that she adorns her profession, and walks worthy of her calling.

5. *Connexions in trade* are sometimes formed between professors and men of the world. This is an undesirable thing, except in those cases where the latter are known to be men of the most inflexible principle, and possessing a high sense of commercial honour. Some such there are, who, in whatsoever things are true, honest, just, lovely, and good report, are patterns which all *professors* might copy with advantage; and which *some* might contemplate with a blush. Many, however, are of an opposite character, and are very unscrupulous as to the means they employ to increase their trade and their profits. When a Christian is linked with such, his situation is uncomfortable and perilous. It is a difficult thing for a man to act in constant opposition to a partner; but he *must* oppose him in all those matters wherein he wishes to violate the principles of integrity. He must not allow injustice, fraud, or lying, to be carried on, under the sanction of *his* name, and if he cannot prevent it, he ought to separate. I knew a tradesman, who, while engaged in a most profitable business with two partners as worldly as himself,

was converted by the grace of God. He became attentive to the means of grace, not only on a Sabbath, but on week days. His partners expressed their disapprobation, and accused him of neglecting the business. In this, as well as in other ways they wished to interfere with his religious pursuits, which, with him, had now become matters of moment and of conscience. He found he was in danger, and knowing that any accumulation of wealth, weighed against the salvation of his soul, was but as the small dust of the balance, he left the concern amidst the reproaches of some of his friends, and the astonishment of all. But he had the rejoicing that results from the testimony of his conscience, that, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had had his conversation in the world. He honoured God, and God subsequently honoured him, for he became more abundantly prosperous than ever. But if he had not, I am persuaded he would have never repented. How careful ought the Christian tradesman to be, that his worldly partner should see nothing in him, but what recommends religion. How much has its character suffered from the conduct of some who have taken in partners on the eve of their own bankruptcy, who have deceived them by false representations of the capabilities of a business, or who have carried on a system of selfish encroachments on *their* share of the profits. It is truly shocking to hear, as we sometimes do hear, persons say that they would rather have for a partner, a man that makes no profession, than one that does. Christian tradesmen, do, do consider this, and tremble lest any part of *your* conduct should be such as to justify this dreadful satire upon the conduct of professors.

There is one duty to unconverted relatives, and

indeed, to converted ones sometimes, which some professors have lamentably neglected; I mean the relief of their necessities, where they have been in circumstances of want. One can easily imagine in what reflections some such persons must indulge upon the conduct of those to whom they are nearly related, who are known by them to be members, or officers, perhaps even pastors of a Christian church, and to be comparatively rich, but who still refuse to help a brother or a sister in their distress; except it be with a grudged pittance, occasionally wrung from them by the force of an appeal unusually urgent. "Can it indeed be true," they say, "that my brother professes himself to be a disciple of the compassionate Saviour, or to have caught the spirit of Him, who never turned away his ear from a tale of human wo, and yet refuse to assist a sister, pining away in almost absolute want? Is this the way in which he adorns his calling? I thought that mercy was an essential feature in the character of a Christian; and admitting that my affliction has been brought on by imprudence, has *he* no sins to be forgiven, by the God from whom he looks for all his supplies? I have been told he is the deacon of a Christian church, and has to dispense the bounty of the rich members to their poorer brethren; does he, on his visits of mercy to the habitations of the sons and daughters of poverty, never recollect that he has a sister enduring those privations which he is honoured to relieve? But, perhaps, he considers that as I am unconverted, he need not concern himself about the sorrows of one to whom he is related only by the ties of flesh and blood. Is this the way to draw me to religion? Does his conduct towards his poor relatives, tend to exalt in their estimation the profession that he makes? Is this the way to soften the

heart of my husband, and my children, towards religion?" Oh! what questions have they not asked, and what sneers have they not uttered, in reference to that form of religion, which has not even common charity to support it? Does not the scripture say, "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Oh! my brother, my brother, did our parents now in their graves, think you would ever leave one of their children, thus to endure unpitied and unrelieved, the wants of penury? Should such a cry as this ever go up to heaven against a Christian? And does it *not* go up against Christians of all denominations, deacons and clergymen too of different churches? How many tears are shed daily, how many hearts are daily bursting, of persons who have Christian relatives that could, but will not help them? What shall we say, what does the world say, of those who figure away at public meetings, and in the lists of contributors to societies, but who suffer their own flesh and blood to be unclothed and unfed? But there are some who are as parsimonious towards the cause of religion and charity, as they are to their own poor relations; and are never liberal in any thing except to some object for their own gratification. In many cases, I believe, this want of compassion for needy relatives is the result of that wicked and detestable pride, which is ashamed of them. In others, it is considered to be a righteous retribution, for the rashness, imprudence, and unprincipled conduct, that occasioned the distress. I would not encourage imprudence, or improvidence, but when the offender is already suffering her punishment, even to a degree of starvation and remorse, that has all but broken

her heart, is it for the hand of a professing Christian—a man who owns but for infinite mercy he had been in hell—to inflict, by *his* cruelty, the only blow that is wanting to crush the sufferer to the dust? Ye rich professors, and ye that are not rich, but are still in comfortable circumstances, let me plead with you on behalf of those who are bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. I will not ask you for relief to a relative nearer than a *brother* or a *sister*, for to suppose the church of God is disgraced, defiled, insulted, by the union of such a monster as a child that refuses to help a destitute *father* or *mother*, is too improbable a conjecture to be made.

If, in conclusion of this chapter, it might be thought seasonable to suggest a few words of encouragement and comfort; topics of this kind are both numerous and delightful. Think of the grace that hath made you to differ from your unregenerate relatives. While you pity them, and mourn over their condition, give God unceasing and unbounded thanks that you are not like them. Cherish the hope that you may yet be useful in persuading some of them to accompany you to the kingdom of heaven. Grace, when it enters a family, is generally diffusive. You may not now see any influence of your example, nor any answer to your prayers,—but you do not see the end. You may never live to realize your hopes, or gather the fruit of your exertions; this may be a felicity designed to swell the rapture of the skies. You may meet in heaven those whom you leave apparently on the road to hell.

But you tremble for yourself. Instead of hoping to be useful to others, you sometimes fear that *you* shall fall. How can you withstand the influence of example and solicitation? It is a hard thing to get

along with every body to help, how much more with every body to hinder. Hearken to what God says, "*My grace is sufficient* for THEE." Mark that, for *thee*. Trust it, expect it, hope for it. Look up into heaven by faith, see those millions round the throne, they were all, or nearly all, at one time as you are now. They had the same difficulties, and surveyed them with the same fears as you do—but, behold, there they are. The great Captain of their salvation sustained them. The omnipotent God never forsook them. The arm that sustained them, is not shortened that it cannot save *you*.—"Wherefore dost thou doubt, O, thou of little faith?" Be not faithless but believing.

Anticipate for yourself that blissful world where all the righteous, none but the righteous, and the righteous in the absolute perfection of their righteousness, will be found. Sustain your present struggles against the influence and the danger of the examples of the unconverted, by the consideration that they will cease with your continuance in this world. Maintain, therefore, with untiring zeal, and an unyielding firmness, your separation from the world, and soon the world will be for ever separated from *you*. The ungodliness of the ungodly will then no more distress you, but you shall through eternity delight yourself in the presence of God your Saviour, with the intercourse of the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.*

If it should sometimes distress you to think of missing those in heaven, who were dear to you on earth, let it stir you up to more affectionate, earnest, and prayerful efforts for their eternal salvation: but let it not lead you to suppose that it will be there, as

* Some of the topics in this chapter are much more enlarged upon in the author's work entitled, "The Family Monitor."

it is here, a real diminution of your bliss. The mutual recognition of saints in the heavenly world seems highly probable, notwithstanding the silence maintained by scripture on a subject so deeply interesting to all our *social* feelings, but to our social feelings only. A great deal more inquisitiveness has been exercised in reference to this subject, and much more importance attached to it, than really belong to it. The social feelings arise out of the social ties, and depend upon them for their existence and continuance; and consequently when the cause ceases the effect will cease with it. To suppose there can be in heaven, where all our animal propensities, our natural instincts, and our social relations exist no longer; where the very body of the resurrection will have undergone an entire change of organization, and will bear no longer an affinity to flesh and blood, any near resemblance to the present emotions which are awakened by the names of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, is to forget the great and entire change which immortality is to make in our nature. It is amidst these dear relationships, these tender charities, and these strong propensities, necessary to our earthly sojourn, that we are trained up for that higher, holier, and more intellectual existence; but these things will fall away from the spiritual body, as its mere swaddling bands in the chrysalis state of its being, in that moment when it shall rise from the grave the pure image of its glorified Redeemer. No; we are compelled to believe, difficult as it may be to conceive of it now, that the absence from heaven, of those who form so large a portion of our happiness on earth, will be no diminution of the bliss of the celestial paradise; though doubtless that bliss will be enhanced and sweetened by the presence of those *we loved below.*

CHAPTER XIII.

THE UNMARRIED PROFESSOR.

WHEN Jehovah had proceeded so far in the work of creation, as to have produced the mineral, vegetable, and irrational tribes, he saw that there yet needed a rational and presiding mind to govern the whole, to be his representative in his own world, and to act as the High Priest of this new and beautiful temple of nature, in offering up on *their* behalf, as well as his own, the praise of all creatures to their omnipotent Parent. "And God created man in his own image." Still, however, the last finishing stroke of grace was even yet to be added; and God created *woman*, to be the companion of man. "*The Lord God saw that it was not good that the man should be alone.*" Even then, when all the beauties of paradise as yet unsoiled, bloomed and glowed around him, to please his eye; when all its melodies and harmonies sent their music through the ear to his soul; when he fed on fruits which no worm had ever corrupted, no frost had ever shrivelled; then, when he needed none to wipe the tear from his eye, or the sweat from his brow; none to counsel him for he was wise; to comfort him, for he was happy; none to calm the perturbations of his conscience, for he was innocent; none to lighten his care, for he

was at ease; none to minister to him in sickness, for he was a stranger to its malady, nor to bear up his head sinking in death, for he was not yet mortal —even then, said his Maker, and who knew the being he had made, *it is not good for the man to be alone*, and he made him a wife out of his own body, and married them himself in the garden of Eden; and blessed them, and said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. What an honour, and a necessity did this attach to marriage. It is an institute of God, and an institute of the paradisaic state. And it still survives the fall, the gracious provision of a God, intent in his unmerited bounty upon the comfort of his apostate creatures, for the solace of man, amidst the cares, the labours, and the sorrows of his earthly pilgrimage. And while it is designed for his comfort in his terrestrial sojourn, it is also intended to help as well as succour him, in his journey to the skies. Itself the type of that closer union, into which his soul is brought to Christ by faith in order to salvation, its tender sympathies, its jealous charities, and its loving ingenuities, are all designed by God to sustain by vigilance, and counsel, and prayer, the interests of his immortal spirit. The marriage of human beings, is a union of minds as well as bodies, and a union intended to keep up religion in the world, as well as population; first, by promoting the piety of the parties themselves; next, the piety of their children, and through them of mankind in general. Every family seems to be a miniature both of the church, and of the nation, where the piety of the one, and the subjection of the other, shall be seen in its simplest and its purest form, and from which as it springs, the greater communities shall be fed. But how are these ends to be accomplished, if piety be not a part of the

character and conduct of those who enter into the marriage compact? That people who are not pious themselves, should disregard this, and not choose or wish a holy companion in the journey of life, is not to be wondered at, but to be expected—but that professors of religion should neglect it, is a matter both of surprise and regret.

This brings me to the subject of the present chapter—THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO MARRY ONLY SUCH AS ARE HOPEFULLY PIOUS. This duty is so obvious, and involves so much of their comfort in future life, that it might have been supposed the general performance of it would render any admonition on the subject unnecessary. Observation, however, confirms the fact, that there is scarcely any branch of Christian obligation more neglected; a circumstance which renders it incumbent on the ministers of religion, and the pastors of churches to call the attention of their hearers to this subject. *

Let us hear the law of Christ, as delivered by the pen of the apostle: "The wife is bound by the law, as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, ONLY IN THE LORD."—1 Cor. vii. 39. To marry *in the Lord*, must mean, marrying one who is a Christian, at least by profession. This rule, it is true, is by the Apostle applied to the case of widows; but the same reason exists for applying it

* The importance of the subject, and the great neglect of it, must be my apology for again dwelling upon it, after having already introduced it into some of my former publications. On this account, I had determined to pass it over in *this* work; but on re-considering the matter, I came to the conclusion that it is so entirely in place here, and concerns so large a number of professors, it ought not to be omitted; and I have therefore devoted this chapter to it, where it will be read by many who never saw my other books.

to *all* unmarried persons. The other passage usually quoted on the subject, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers;"—2 Cor. vi. 14, refers perhaps specifically to the fellowship of the church, but still by fair inference may be extended to marriage. This is the law, then, that no Christian should marry any one who is not also a Christian; or who is not upon good grounds supposed to be such. I say it is the *law;* not merely advice, or counsel, but command, and as binding on our conscience as any other precept of the New Testament. We have no more right to attempt to annul or evade this command, than we have any other of Christ's laws.

Permit me to bring before you, the evils resulting from a neglect of this rule, and marrying an irreligious person. Some of these affect YOURSELVES.

Your *comfort* is materially involved. A difference of taste or pursuit in minor matters is not conducive to happiness. "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" This applies to all things, but most of all to the transcendently important affair of religion. This is a subject continually recurring, entering into all the arrangements of the family, which can never be put aside, except by the professor's consenting, for the sake of peace, to give up or conceal his religion, and becoming an apostate. You will not merely be left to pursue your own course, without sympathy or fellowship from your dearest earthly friend, but by consistently supporting your religion, will perhaps provoke distaste, dislike, ill-will, strife, and alienation. How many have had to choose between apostacy or domestic peace. Dreadful alternative! And where they have had grace to give up their comfort instead of their reli-

gion, they have not only died a martyr's death, but lived a life of martyrdom. What have not many wives endured from irreligious husbands, not merely in being the silent but horrified witnesses of their sins, but in being the victims of their wrath. Many a man has been the murderer of his wife without being hanged for it. But where things do not come to this pitch, and the want of religion does not affect in the smallest degree the exercise of conjugal love, yet think of the pain of being obliged to consider that good wife, or kind husband, an enemy of God; if they be in sickness, to have the dreadful thought come into the mind, that they are about to die, and unprepared for the change. Oh! can you imagine the anguish of a wife, occupying "the dreadful post of observation darker every hour," watching the slow progress of disease in a dying husband, anxious to catch from his departing spirit, some few words to sustain her hope that he is going to heaven, and then for ever after to be haunted with the recollection, that "he died and made no sign!"—Will you hazard this?

Think of the influence of such a connection on your *religion*. We all need helps, not hinderances in the walk of faith. With every advantage in our favour, how slow is our progress heavenward! And how much are we likely to be impeded by a companion, who is ever seeking to draw or drag us back? Can we rise with such a weight, or walk with such a clog? How is our devotion flattened by the constant companionship of one who has no sympathy with us in our spiritual feelings or tastes? Yo will often be hindered and prevented from attendin the means of grace; required to do things against which your conscience revolts; and will sometimes

give way for peace, in matters which bring guilt and distress into your minds.

Even your *salvation* may be brought into peril. Many cases have occurred in which persons ran well till they were married: I have known such, and have seen them from that time commence a retrograde course. Apostacy has in myriads of instances commenced at the altar. Instead of taking their companion with them to heaven, as they imagined they should, these companions took *them* to perdition. How insidious is the influence of a husband or a wife in decoying the other from the paths of godliness into the ways of the world; and in some cases how systematic, persevering, and successful. There is the silent influence of example, which alone is powerful; then there are concealed temptations to little departures from consistency, till, by degrees, the poor victim is caught in the snare, and gives up all spiritual piety, and religious observances.

I now call upon you to consider the consequences of such a marriage upon the CHILDREN, if there should be any. Will they be brought up for God, and his church? Suppose the converted party should labour for the salvation of the family, and labour the more for being left alone in the work, what a counteraction comes from the other. The hearts of the children are by nature corrupt, and have already a bias towards evil example. How will they shield themselves from a mother's pious remarks, by a father's irreligious example? O, with what heart-breaking anguish, has many a pious mother seen her children led away from her side as she was walking *with* God, and *to* heaven, by the hand of her own husband, and *their* own father. With what a mixture of delicacy and distress have I heard some mothers and wives allude to this sad

circumstance. Some of the worst families have been those which were the children of parents, one of whom was a professor and the other not.

Dwell upon the effects of such unions to THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. These are inscribed in dark characters upon the page of sacred history. This was the cause that corrupted the antediluvian church, and became the source of that universal depravity which brought the flood upon the earth. "The sons of God," i. e. the professors of religion in the line of Seth, "saw the daughters of men," i. e. the descendants of Cain, who made no profession of true religion, "that they were fair, and they took wives of all that they chose."—Gen. vi. 2. In subsequent times the crimes of idolatry flowed in continually upon the Jewish church through the channel of unholy marriages. "*And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons,* AND SERVED THEIR GODS. *And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and* FORGOT THE LORD THEIR GOD, AND SERVED BALAAM AND THE GROVES."—Judges, iii. 7. Solomon's history has a fearful interest in reference to this subject, and shows that the strongest mind, and the most splendid piety and zeal may be corrupted by ungodly wives. See also how the marriage of AHAB is recorded: "*And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam,* THAT HE TOOK TO WIFE JEZEBEL, *the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. But there was none like unto Ahab who did sell himself to work wickedness, in the sight of the Lord,* WHOM JEZEBEL HIS WIFE STIRRED UP."—1 Kings, xxi. 25. Read the language of EZRA, chap-

ter ix., and also the admonitory words of NEHEMIAH, xiii. 23—27.

If we come forward to the Christian church, we may safely affirm that few circumstances have had a greater influence in deteriorating religion in the hearts of professors, or in corrupting the communion of saints, than a neglect of the Christian rule of marriage. The pious party has not only had the tone of religion lowered in their own minds, but have been anxious, and in innumerable cases have succeeded, to introduce the other into the church, which by the operation of this two-fold mischief has been grievously injured in its piety and purity.

On all these grounds, such marriages are injurious and should be avoided. Perhaps female professors more frequently violate this rule, than men; which may be accounted for in great measure by the circumstance, that they are the chosen, and not the choosing party. An offer of marriage, where the individual who makes it is even in some tolerable degree respectable, and desirable, is a compliment, so far as it goes, which of itself is apt to entangle a female's heart, at any rate her vanity, and to produce a hesitancy, even where her conscience dictates the propriety of an immediate negative. This hesitancy is greatly increased, of course, when the offer comes from one who is in *every* respect desirable, with the solitary exception of a want of religion. How many have been induced by the prospect of an advantageous settlement in life, to overlook this one great defect, and to balance the want of piety, by wealth and worldly respectability; and of these how large a proportion have repented of their sins, and lived to envy the woman, who though struggling with poverty, was blest and happy with a *pious* husband. It is of great consequence that

the mind should be previously fortified against this danger by a deep inwrought conviction of the obligation of the Christian's rule of marriage, and the unlawfulness of violating it. We must not, in any case, have our weapons to seek when we want them to use. If we have then to discuss the propriety of an act gainful in itself, when the temptation to perform it is pressing upon us, we are almost sure to be overcome. The heart is a bad casuist in all cases, but especially in a love affair, or the prospect of a gainful marriage. Young people who are professors, should begin life with this, as one of their maxims, and which they should feel no more at liberty to set aside than they do any other of the precepts of religion, that no inducement should be strong enough to lead a Christian to marry an irreligious person.

When a connection has been formed while both parties were in an unconverted state, a subsequent change in the religious views and feelings of either of them is not a sufficient ground for dissolving the connection, except by the consent of the other; but where the engagement was entered into while both parties were professors, and one of them, before marriage, throws off religion, the other is not only authorized by the word of God to terminate the connection, but is required to do so.

The excuses by which many attempt to justify their neglect of the Christian law, are often specious, but never valid. Sometimes the hopeful appearances of the individual whom a professor wishes to marry, are pleaded. In some cases these appearances are hypocritically assumed purposely to deceive; in others they are a real yielding to the persuasion of affection, and an actual intention to alter the conduct, but far enough off from true religion. Even piety appears lovely in those we love, and may

be imitated as far as it can be without the reality, for their sake. The godliness which is seen for the first time in a person, when he desires to gain the heart of a true Christian, should be always looked upon with great caution, and even suspicion. When we *wish* to think an object of our regard a Christian, a very little evidence will suffice to produce conviction. If the individual whom the person wishes to marry, be not a professor, in the sense attached to that term in these pages, it is a presumption, though certainly not a proof, that he is quite undecided in his religious character.

It is not, I believe, an uncommon case for Christians to marry unconverted persons under the idea and hope of converting them. Is marriage, then, one of the means of grace? Has the plan usually succeeded where it has been tried? Alas! how often has the conversion been of another kind, and the professor has been led back to the world? We must give up all excuses, then, and admit that it is the duty of a professor, to marry only in the Lord. But if it were not, and it was left to his own option, would it not be for his happiness to choose a pious companion; one who could help him in his Christian course, and enter into his hopes and fears, his joys and sorrows, touching the subject that lies nearest to his heart; one who would aid him to bring up his children in the fear of God, and who would not thwart him in his plans for their eternal interests; one that would co-operate with him in all his efforts to glorify God, to bless his species, and to extend the church; one that would soothe him in sickness, sadness, and death, with the words of consolation, experience, and prayer; one whom he would be in no fear of losing in the dark valley of the shadow of death; one whom he hoped to dwell with as an angel

spirit in heaven, after having dwelt with her as an angel in the flesh on earth? O, who that has tasted the sweet and holy influence which religion imparts to the intercourse of a *holy* couple, their mingled love and piety, would willingly forego this sacred and solemn delight?

We are not however to suppose, that religion is the only thing to be thought of as a suitable pre-requisite for the formation of this union between Christians. There must be a general suitableness in age, rank, education, temper, and taste. It would be an extravagant enthusiasm to imagine that religion, because it is the *first* thing, is *every* thing, and that any one who presents himself should be accepted, provided he can make good his pretensions to the character of a Christian Christianity does not level distinctions, and annihilate dissimilarities; does not convert age into youth, deformity into beauty, ignorance into knowledge, nor absolute clownishness into elegance; nor does it offer an amalgamation to make these things blend in a harmonious and agreeable compound. Religion is offended by all *unseemly* things, as well as all unholy ones. Under the law, an ox and an ass were not to be yoked together in ploughing; nor linen and woollen to be woven into the same texture for garments. And, under the gospel, we are to do nothing unlovely or of bad report, in the way of incongruous marriage mixtures: they are an offence against the dignity, if not a violation of the sanctity, of the institute of matrimony.

Much less is it allowable to professors to treat the preliminary course with fickleness, or levity. The very steps to the altar of marriage are sacred, and no one should act the flirt, the coquette, or the traitor, there. A darker stain, short of gross and palpable immorality, can scarcely rest upon the

character of a professor than faithlessness to his engagements as a lover. To desert a female, after he has engaged her affections, is a hateful compound of many vices in one; it is a cruelty which has sent many a lovely girl to her grave or a madhouse; and, where it has not gone so far as this, has withered that peace, which he once cherished with his smiles: it is a treachery of the basest kind; a cold, heartless, and often remorseless baseness of mind which should never once be named amongst saints. Nor ought only this extreme of the act to be avoided, but all approaches to it also; all those attentions which, though unaccompanied by direct proposals, indicate a preference, and may be fairly construed into an intention, should be carefully abstained from, if nothing ulterior be contemplated. It is wrong for any one to inveigle the affections of another, and then to defend himself after he has retired, by the excuse, that he never made any proposals, nor even a declaration of attachment. It may be asked, "How are we to know the suitableness of a person for such a union with us, without being with them, and paying attentions which cannot be mistaken; and if we are not at liberty to retire after we have once committed ourselves, how perilous a thing is marriage?" To this I reply, hold your heart in abeyance, till suitable inquiry, and silent, unnoticed observation have been made. All trifling with the affection of another, is most dishonourable in every one, and especially in a Christian: and yet this is too often done, and the credit of the religious profession has been materially injured by it. If any thing of importance, any thing likely to affect the future happiness of the parties, should come out during the progress of the acquaintance, which was, in the commencement of it, concealed by either of

them, such as liability to serious bodily or mental disease, or deranged worldly circumstances, or insincerity of religious profession, in that case no blame can attach to the one that retires. Nor is any censure merited in those cases where the connection is dissolved by mutual consent. Much reproach has been brought upon some young professors by rash, precipitate, offers to unsuitable persons, from whom it has become, at length, almost absolutely necessary they should withdraw. Nor can some be cleared from the reproach of imprudently marrying before they had a rational prospect of supporting a family. Expenses increased faster than they were able to meet them. Debts were contracted, means resorted to for liquidating them, forbidden by every principle of honour, and disgrace soon followed. It pains me to think of the instances which I have witnessed of young people, once bidding fair to be respectable and respected, not only in the world but in the church also, ruined as to their prospects and reputation, by an imprudent marriage. It is, then, an absolute sin, for any one to marry without the rational prospect of supporting a family.

It is also a great discredit to young professors, especially while living at home, to form any acquaintance, and carry it on without the knowledge, and especially against the wishes of their parents. I admit there are exceptions to this general rule, but they rarely occur. Disobedience to parental authority in this matter, where the children are under age, and in most cases where they are beyond it, is a deep blot upon a Christian profession. The social and domestic virtues should always shine forth with peculiar lustre in the character of a Christian.

A union for life is so serious a matter, so deeply involving not only our own and our companion's

comfort, but our piety also; so powerfully affecting, perhaps, the welfare for both worlds of a family; so greatly influencing the church of Christ, and the cause of religion in the world—that it cannot be treated with too much solemnity, or approached, even in its preliminary steps, with too much caution. Nor is there any thing next to our own salvation, which should be made the subject of so much earnest prayer to God, for direction and guidance.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PROFESSOR IN PROSPERITY.

"I know how to abound."—Phil. iv. 12. The Apostle claims for himself in these words, one of the most rare and difficult attainments ever made in this world of imperfection and probation; I mean the right use of prosperity. How few are his imitators! Prosperity is a comparative term, and signifies an improved or an improving state of our temporal affairs; in its most emphatic sense it imports a *considerable* improvement, a great elevation in our affairs, or a rapid accumulation of wealth: some employ the term as denoting any advancement, whether it be the humbler or more exalted stations of life. A workman or servant is in prosperity whose wages are doubled; a female is in prosperity who is raised by marriage, from a lower to a higher grade of society; the small tradesman is in prosperity who is delivered from the difficulties he once experienced, and is enabled to provide, though it be only a competency, for his family. Still it is usually expressive of a somewhat higher state of things than this, and as indicating a thriving trade, or the possession of considerable property.

A professor is to let his light shine before men. This of course extends to every situation in which he is placed. It is to be an *ever* shining light; a radiance that is every where to attend him; it must

illumine the gloom of his poverty, and add even to the splendour of his prosperity. Like the sun, his own appropriated emblem, he should shine the brighter the higher he rises. Prosperity is a gift granted him, that he may glorify God; a golden talent, to be carried with deep humility and gratitude to the foot of the cross, and consecrated to *Him* who bought him with his precious blood. It widens the sphere of his opportunity to honour God, a sphere which he should be anxious to fill with a hallowed influence to the very circumference.

There are four virtues especially necessary in a state of prosperity. Of these, the first is GRATITUDE.

A thankless prosperity is an unnatural and an unholy state. Such a man's heart is hard as the rock, and barren as the sand; continually receiving the rays of the sun, and the riches of the clouds, but returning nothing. A Christian must not only be remote in his own feelings from that atheistic state of mind, which traces up all to lucky accidents and fortunate turns, but he must take care to acknowledge God before men, as the sole author of his success. His whole frame and deportment, must be a devout confession to God. It must be seen that he ascribes all he has, not to his own skill, sagacity, or industry, but to the blessing of the Most High. "By the grace of God I am what I am," must be his declaration. On every favour he should inscribe the name of God as the giver, just as we write the name of our friends on their gifts.

God should not only be acknowledged, but *praised* for prosperity. It is a blessing, unless by our abuse of it we turn it into a curse; and is spoken of as such throughout the word of God. God has not confounded the distinction between plenty and want,

nor required *us* to do so. It is indeed a mercy, and should be received as such, to be released from privation, and care, and necessity. The man who talks of poverty as a good in itself, speaks alike against reason and against revelation; it may be over-ruled for good, and often is, but in itself it is an evil. A cause of thankfulness it certainly is, to have the comforts of this life; and prosperity, both as a means of enjoyment and usefulness, demands our gratitude. Were all our temporal mercies employed as they ought to be, as means of proving to us the enormity of our sins, as fuel to feed the flame of our love, as mirrors in which to see the goodness of Jehovah, as ties to bind our hearts to his service, and as instruments to promote his cause in the world, prosperity would indeed be felt to be a blessing, and would send us to God with the language of the Psalmist, and with his emotions too, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

WATCHFULNESS is the next duty incumbent upon the prosperous professor, for prosperity is a state of danger. This has been confessed by all, and experienced by multitudes. It is the most trite and hackneyed of all themes, on which moralists as well as divines have equally descanted. In what vivid colours does ASAPH pourtray this subject in the 73d Psalm. How often are we in effect told that the prosperity of fools shall slay them. How affectingly is this expressed in the prayer of AGUR.—PROV. XXX. 4—6. In what alarming terms it is thundered forth in the words of Christ: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to

enter into the kingdom of God;" and the fearful sentiment is echoed by the Apostle, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."—1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. I seem in reading such language almost to question the truth of what I have before written, and to doubt whether prosperity is really good: at any rate it must be allowed to be a dangerous good, and we have seen numerous and melancholy instances and proofs of the danger. How rarely does it happen that persons are not injured by it; how still more rarely that they are the better for it; so rarely indeed that an individual who passes through the trial unhurt, is admired as a striking proof of the riches of divine grace; while he that is really improved by it, is wondered at and talked of as a religious marvel. But, oh! the myriads of the martyrs of an improved condition! What multitudes as they ascended from the humble vale of poverty, and emerged from the thorny and sequestered glens which it contained, into the sunny spots and higher grounds of wealth or easy competence, have lost their religion as they gradually rose, till by the time they had reached the summit, it was all gone; and they who in the valley looked habitually up to heaven, as soon as they were upon the flowery mount, looked exclusively at the earthly prospect below them. Some have become heretical in opinion, others have sunk into confirmed and unrestrained worldly-mindedness, while not a few have plunged into actual and notorious immorality. In the far greater number of instances, however, it has not

gone to this length, but only produced a lukewarmness, which, without impairing the moral character, has destroyed the spiritual one, by leaving nothing of godliness but the form.

The danger of prosperity arises from two causes. 1. Its tendency to repress some of the dispositions in which real religion consists. There is little room in such a state for submission to the will of God, for faith, and trust, and hope, in reference to providential arrangements and temporal affairs. Not that prosperity excludes *all* room for these virtues, but still it must be admitted that there is not the same opportunity or call for them as in a state of adversity. And these, be it recollected, are some of the higher elements and more vigorous exercises of true piety. It is true that as regards spiritual things, there is as much opportunity, necessity, and call for faith and hope in the one state as in the other; but as for that daily exercise of patient submission to present privations; that equally constant trust in Providence for future supplies; and that steadfast faith in the promise of ultimate good from seeming evil, which the afflicted and necessitous are called to attempt, the prosperous know little of these things. Their religion is apt to become not only enfeebled, but diseased for want of these more athletic and healthy exertions; just as the sons of affluence, who feed on luxury, who are clad in purple and fine linen, and sleep on down, are puny and effeminate compared with the weather-beaten mariner, or the hardy mountaineer. Great caution, much watchfulness, and earnest prayer are necessary, to guard against this danger. It requires much grace indeed to rise upon the wings of faith, and soar above the enchanting scene of things temporal into the region of things eternal, when the former spread out their va-

riegated beauties, amidst the glowing sunshine of prosperity; and with all that is gratifying in present possessions, to yield our hearts to the inpulses of hope, and travel onward to the unseen and comparatively unknown future.

2. But the danger of prosperity arises from its tendency to generate and foster some of the evils to which Christianity is directly opposed. Numerous are the weeds, which, though apparently killed by the frosts, and buried under the snows of winter, obtain a resurrection and a vigorous life by the summer's sun; numerous the noxious and disgusting reptiles and vermin that come forth from their holes when the season of storm is over, to breed and bask in the warmth of the solar beams. Prosperity is that to the imperfections and corruptions of our hearts, which the sun is to these annoyances of our earth.

To those whose besetting sins lie in that direction, it furnishes resources for the indulgence of appetites and the gratification of tastes by no means friendly, when carried beyond the bounds of the strictest moderation, to the spirit of vital godliness. True piety is a self-denying thing, requiring the most rigid temperance in all things. Every approach not only to drunkenness or gluttony, but even tippling and epicurism is inimical to the spirituality and heavenly-mindedness of true religion. Now it has so happened, that some, with the increased means of gratifying their appetites, have fallen into the snare, and acquired habits of self-indulgence, which have utterly destroyed every vestige of piety in their soul.

A haughty spirit and feeling of independence are frequently observable in the prosperous; a temper that seems to say, "Mine own arm hath gotten me

this;" a disposition "to sacrifice to their own drag and to burn incense to their own net:" an insensible and unintentional, but, at the same time, habitual and sinful leaving God out of their calculations and contemplations; and a reliance upon their own energies and exertions. There is about some persons a consciousness of power, a feeling of self-buoyancy, as if they could and must rise unaided, and however opposed. Now this is a most guilty temper, a state of mind of great criminality and odiousness in the sight of God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and without whom we could neither lift an arm, move a step, or exercise a volition.

PRIDE is another evil against which the prosperous professor has the most urgent need to be upon his guard. It is not requisite here to dwell upon the sinfulness and loathsomeness of this disposition. It is irreligious in itself, and it is most inimical to religion in its influence. There are various kinds of pride, or, to speak more correctly, it is exercised in reference to various kinds of objects: there is pride of rank, pride of intellect, pride of person, pride of righteousness,—but besides all these, there is pride of money. It is of the latter kind I now speak; that, which to use a common expression, make a man purse-proud. The union of prosperity and pride is one of the commonest association of things that we ever form: so common that we almost naturally and invariably imagine that a rich man must be a proud one; and are filled with admiration and astonishment where the contrary takes place. This association is referred to in many places of the Word of God. The Psalmist, speaking of the rich, says, "With their mouth they speak proudly;" and in another place, "Pride compasseth them about as a chain." In a person whose heart is subdued, humbled,

and renewed by grace, we may not expect to see such offensive manifestations of this vice, as in an unconverted individual; but even in him, prosperity often produces too much of it. He values himself on account of his wealth; he feels that he is a man of consequence who ought to be looked up to; gives himself airs of importance; expects his opinion to be law; is oracular, dogmatical, overbearing, intolerant, and gives his sentiments with an emphatic "*I* think so." He exacts attention, deference, respect: is susceptible of offence if he imagines himself slighted, and from the high demands he prefers, often *does* imagine that he *is* slighted. He is jealous of rivals, suspicious, censorious. Now all this is pride, *purse-pride*, and it is too often seen in the prosperous professor. He is not perhaps sufficiently aware of it himself, but his friends are, and lament his infirmity. He feels however that he is not so happy nor so holy as he once was, but scarcely suspects the cause; "It is in fact the rich man fading away in his ways." It is the worm of pride feeding upon the root of piety. Religion cannot flourish in such a state of mind as this, for it will prevent that deep humiliation before God, that self-abhorrence, that self-annihilation, that entire dependence, and sense of ill desert which are essential to the spirit of true piety; and, at the same time, will call into active operation many tempers most inimical to godliness.

Akin to this is AMBITION, or a feeling which disposes a man to be craving after something higher and better than he has, rather than to enjoy and improve what he already possesses. No man is forbidden to improve his condition in this world, nor is he required to stop short in the ascending path, or turn out of it, into which he has been led by Providence; but a restless desire after distinction, and aspiring

and dissatisfied temper, which makes the level of ordinary circumstances disagreeable and intolerable; the envying of those who are on higher ground which leads to the determination at all events to be up with them, is quite contrary to the apostolic injunction, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." Prosperity is very apt to make a professor seek for gay, or at any rate rich and fashionable acquaintance. He must have, he thinks, suitable acquaintance for himself and his children, and if he cannot find them in the church, he goes for them into the world; he contracts acquaintance with such persons; exchanges visits; relaxes his religious strictness; adopts their customs; and thus, by little and little, gives up his spirituality, and becomes a worldling in heart, though he is still a professor by name. Sometimes his ambition takes the turn of a longing desire after secular distinctions and civic honours: he wishes to be a member of parliament, or of a corporation, or of a board of guardians, or of some commercial or political committee. He courts office, for he fancies himself fairly entitled to it, much more than many who already hold it. His mind is much taken up about the means to accomplish his end. He goes into company; courts notice; pushes himself forward—and at length succeeds. But is he satisfied? No. He has reached one summit, but it is only to rest and breathe preparatory to his climbing another before him. He is not at ease, for as the career of his prosperity continues, so he argues, ought the progression of his elevation. But where is his religion all this while? Alas! alas! behind on the road; or below in the valley. The house of God, the prayer-meeting, the Bible, the family altar, the closet, are all neglected. He is at a political association, or a civic entertainment,

or at a party confederacy, when he ought to be hearing a sermon, assisting at a church meeting, or uniting in prayer with his brethren. Ambition of this kind has ruined many professors as such, in these days, and will ruin many more if care be not taken.

Perhaps it will be asked, if professors ought to abstain from all such public offices, and refuse all such secular distinctions as those I have alluded to. I reply, certainly not. I am only showing that they ought not to be ambitious, eager, active, to obtain them. When they come unsought and unsolicited; when they are put upon us, almost forced upon us; then they may be regarded as coming from God, and as affording us an opportunity of glorifying him, and serving our generation. But even in this case, the Christian should consider that he is set in slippery places, and should watch and pray that he enter not into temptation. The higher he rises, the more he is likely to turn giddy, and the more earnestly should he present that prayer, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

Worldly-mindedness is a very common, it may be almost said, a general fruit of prosperity. I do not mean by this term absolute covetousness, but a disposition to seek our happiness rather from earthly sources, than spiritual ones. Our profession certainly implies a contrary temper, and supposes that our chief consolation, our habitual comfort, is derived from the spring of religion, the wells of salvation, the pure river of the water of life, clear as chrystal proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb.

But, O how difficult is it to maintain this pure, spiritual, unearthly, heavenly taste in the midst of prosperity! How difficult is it to help loving the

world, when it puts on all its charms, smiles upon us, and caresses us. When we have built a convenient house in a pleasant situation, elegantly furnished it, surrounded it with a beautiful garden and shrubbery, and made all things ready for our friends; when our family is as agreeable within, as the scene is pleasant without, how difficult is it then to avoid saying, "It is good to be here, let us remain here long, and if it were possible, for ever." The worldling says, "give me such a paradise as this, and I want no other or better heaven." Yes, and even the professor sometimes feels this, though he does not say it. His house, and not his God, is the home of his heart. He lives not by faith in God, in Christ, in heaven; but by sense, in the enjoyment of his comforts. He goes not to fashionable amusements; his taste, his habits, and his reputation as a Christian are against this; but he seeks that happiness in his home, which others seek in the ball-room, the theatre, and the card party. Many a man and many a woman, who goes regularly to all the Sabbath and many of the week-day ordinances of religion, and passes for a tolerably prosperous Christian, is miserably low in spiritual piety, and has little enjoyment of God, little communion with Christ, and as little lively hope of glory to be revealed. Prosperity by multiplying the sources of earthly gratification tends to take us off from those which are spiritual and divine; tends to carnalize our affections, to vitiate our holy taste, and to flatten our devotion.

Such are the evils to which the successful professor is ever exposed and which call for his vigilance, caution, and alarm; not that they are necessarily and always connected with prosperity, for then how could it be a blessing; but they are the abuses of it against which he should watch and pray.

HUMILITY is a grace which such persons are especially required to cultivate.

"Walk humbly with thy God," is an injunction which is appropriate with all, but especially to the prosperous. In none can humility shine with such lustre as in them. It is then like the gem set in gold; the lovely flower putting forth all its beauties in full sunshine; the action of the lark coming down from his lofty flight to rest in his lowly bed upon the earth. Nothing is more beautiful in our world than the manifest association of humble piety and temporal prosperity; it is the temper of heaven united with the possession of earth. The man who makes this attainment is great in the kingdom of God. His prosperity is maintained without envy in others, and without injury to himself. Let the prosperous Christian then aim at this beautiful combination. His lowliness will not keep him long behind or below his place. There is a buoyancy in prosperity which is sure to raise him to the surface, and place him where he should be: for there is no individual whose assistance and influence are more generally and urgently sought, or more truly valued, than his whose humility keeps pace with his success.

LIBERALITY is a most incumbent duty in the situation I am now describing; and yet it is not a duty always, nor to the full extent of the obligation often performed. In some cases prosperity withers the benevolent affections of the heart, and closes the outlets of mercy. Like those flowers that bloom at night, or in the wintry months, but die away before the power of a summer sun; or others, that flourish best in a poor soil, the liberality of some professors seems to become stunted, enfeebled, and contracted, as they increase in riches: the more they have, the less

they give. I have read, or heard somewhere, of a person who had been singularly generous while comparatively poor, but who was observed to become parsimonious when he was prosperous; and who, upon being asked how it came to pass that he who gave so much in proportion to his income, when he had but little, now gave so little when he had so much, made this shocking reply, "When I had little, it was not worth saving; but when my fortune became large it seemed an object worthy to be kept together and accumulated." If I do not forget, this confession was made upon a death-bed, and amidst the horrors of an awakened and guilty conscience. This is by no means an uncommon, though a very melancholy case. The love of money very commonly increases with the money itself, and therefore needs to be most tremblingly and prayerfully watched, lest as property gradually comes in, it steals over the heart and holds it in occupation for Mammon. It sometimes happens that the heart gets corrupted by an appropriation of the first fruits of prosperity to worldly show, and an enlarged domestic expenditure. This begets a habit of expense, and produces a scale of living, which goes on increasing, all the while swallowing up prosperity as fast as it comes in, and thus leaving but little for God. On the contrary, a professor should devote the first fruits of his success to God, and satisfy himself with moderate accommodations, thus enlarging by frugality, both his means of serving God and himself also. Many begin where they should leave off, and therefore end worse than they begun.

The subject of this chapter is so important, that I must prolong it for the purpose of most solemnly admonishing at still greater length, not only those who *are* prosperous, but who are desiring and ex-

pecting to be rich. The enemies of religion are continually reproaching its friends with an undue regard to wealth, whose very sarcasms are instructive, though not always just. They assume what is not correct, that religion is intended to inspire us with aversion, or at any rate to produce absolute indifference to wealth, instead of merely moderating our desires after it, making us contented if we do *not* obtain it, and leading us to consecrate it to God if we *do*. It is not the possession we should dread, but the inordinate desire, the dishonest means, the undue love, and the covetous hoarding of it. I am quite aware, that it is difficult to have money and not love it; hard indeed to have a golden image in the house, and not worship it. It is also quite evident that covetousness is indeed the sin of the church. In this commercial age and country, where men often rise from the workman to the master, and from nothing to affluence; where the career is open to all; and where, once engaged in the complexity and onward impulses of a large business, it is so difficult to stop or slacken the pace, there is imminent peril of professors forgetting their high vocation, and living only to get riches. We see them toiling and panting along the road of trade, in pursuit of the golden object of ambition, apparently as eager to obtain it, as any who do not profess as they do, to seek first the kingdom of God; enlarging their desires with every addition to their gains; and then extending their means to the limit of their desires. Professors, ye who are in this situation, pause for one short season in your career, and read that solemn admonition, which one who knows both your own hearts, and the secrets of eternity better than you do, has caused to stand out in characters more fearful and intelligible than those which the mystic

hand inscribed on the walls of BELSHAZZAR's palace: "HOW HARDLY SHALL THEY THAT HAVE RICHES ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD." There it stands, written in imperishable letters, "*that riches render the way to heaven difficult, and smooth the road to hell.*" There it is, printed, published, placarded shall I say? on the road side, yea, on the side posts of the narrow gate, that opens into the path of life, that wealth is a snare to the soul, and makes salvation difficult. No prophet's inspiration is necessary to interpret this declaration of Christ, nor expositor's comment to illustrate it; it is so plain that he who runs may read, and he who reads must understand. Good in itself, and capable of doing good, and evil only when it is abused, and yet so often abused that its possession is more frequently injurious than beneficial, wealth should never be intensely longed after by any. Professors, take as it were a bird's eye view of the dangers it throws in the way of travellers to eternity. Does it not, as I have shown, produce the pride of life so opposite to the humility and poverty of spirit, which is essential to the nature of true religion? Does it not generate a worldly-mindedness, which makes its possessor contented with things seen and temporal, and disposes him to mind only earthly things? Does it not lead to a prevalent feeling of independence, so unlike that habitual trust and reliance on God, which the Scriptures require? Does it not originate, and keep up, both the care and perplexity of getting, and the anxiety of disposing; and thus exhaust the vigour as well as time, upon worldly objects, leaving the soul neglected, impoverished, and defrauded? Does it not draw away the Christian from the means of grace? Does it not corrupt the simplicity of the mind, and the gentleness of the character? Does it

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king vessel, had so loaded himself with gold, that

he could not swim to land, but sunk immediately in the deep; would you not exclaim, what shall it profit him now? And, oh! could you see the more miserable ghost of a lost, rich worldling return from the unseen world, and hear him go howling about our earth, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" would you not be struck with the folly of being so anxious about the scramble for wealth, which is carried on by many, while our world is sinking, and the very weight of which, if they get it, tends to make their escape from eternal ruin the more difficult?

What then would I have you do? Stop in your career of industry? Break up your prosperous concern? Turn from your flattering prospects? Quit the pursuit of wealth to avoid its dangers? Refuse riches when they are sent by Providence? Choose poverty with its privations, because it is less dangerous than affluence? No. I advise no such thing. God is omnipotent and all-sufficient, and can make his grace sufficient for the salvation of a rich man, as well as a poor one. What you are to do, is to moderate your anxiety to be rich, to lower your sense of the importance of wealth—to be content, and feel that you *could* be content if God were to deny your prosperity, or to diminish your fortune—to avoid a grasping and ever expansive ambition—to let it be seen that your prosperity rather comes upon you, than is anxiously sought by you—to give this impression to those who know and see you, that it has fallen like a shower from heaven, rather than been drawn up as from a well dug with almost consuming labour in the earth by your own hands—and especially to take care that the riches acquired by honest industry, and unambitious, unengrossing

diligence, be diffused for the glory of God, and the best interests of man. Wealth justly obtained, and piously spent, instead of a curse is a blessing, instead of diminishing a man's religion, increases it; and instead of hindering him in his way to heaven, helps him. Where Providence has blessed you with the possession of property, seek for divine grace, that you may be blessed in the use of it, for, without the latter, the former is no blessing at all.

Rich professors, I entreat you to consider *the right uses and solemn responsibility of wealth.* The age of miracles is past; and indeed while it lasted, the employment of property in the spread of the Gospel, was not dispensed with. Read the admonition again, which is addressed to you. "*Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy:* THAT THEY DO GOOD; THAT THEY BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS, READY TO DISTRIBUTE, WILLING TO COMMUNICATE, *laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*"—1 Tim. vi. 17—19. Enter into the spirit as well as comply with the letter of this apostolic admonition. By how many motives may the liberal use of your property be urged upon you, each of which ought to be of itself sufficient, and all united, irresistible. You cannot be ignorant that God has made known his will that your property should be so employed. He has commanded it, and thus has not left it to your inclination or option. Your property is the gift of God, given not for your own use only, but for the glory of his name and the good of his creatures. You must give account, in the day of judgment, for every farthing entrusted to your care; aad in that account will be included all

that you have spent upon yourselves, all the opportunities you have had of doing any thing for Christ, as well those you have neglected, as those you have embraced. You have the most powerful and moving of all possible examples set before you in "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich." "You are redeemed that others may be delivered; renewed that others may be converted; blessed yourselves that you may be a blessing to others, and are so consecrated to God as to be obliged to make it apparent, not from professions but from actions, that the objects to which you are supremely devoted are the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, in the conversion and salvation of men, the honour of religion, and the glory of God; that, in one word, RELIGION IS THE GREAT BUSINESS OF LIFE."* You should remember the incalculably superior value of property when employed for glorifying God and saving souls, than when devoted to personal gratification and family aggrandizement. You should consider the influence which benevolence will have upon your own character in strengthening the virtues of Christianity and ripening for you a world of unmingled love. You should dwell much upon the present condition of the world and the claims which its moral miseries urge upon the heart of every Christian; a world lying in wickedness from which nearly a hundred thousand immortal souls pass away each day, and the far greater number of them, it is to be feared, to the pit

* "Is all well?" a Pastoral Inquiry, by the Rev. Joseph Fletcher, D. D., 1*s.* 6*d.* I cordially recommend this most admirable and comprehensive little work, as pre-eminently worthy the frequent perusal and self-application of all professors.

of eternal destruction. You should ponder upon the solemn consideration, that the work of soul destruction, the perdition of immortal beings, is thus frightfully going on for want of money to arrest its progress: that hell is filling up with the lost spirits of men, because professing Christians will not supply the means of sending them the opportunity of salvation. You should recollect that you live in an age distinguished above all that preceded it by its growing facilities for doing good, by its clear exposition of the sin of covetousness, by its frequent appeals to the liberality of Christians, and its encouragement to proceed in the career of benevolence. You should weigh well your responsibility for the influence you exert upon others by your liberality or parsimony. But when and where shall we end in stating the obligations of the rich professor of the Gospel?

I will put to you the following case. Suppose the Lord Jesus Christ were to appear to you in a visible form of glory somewhat similar to that in which he appeared to his apostle in the Isle of Patmos, and should deposit in your hands, twenty, fifty, or a hundred thousand pounds, and were to address you thus: "I entrust this property to your care, with a permission to use a part of it for yourselves, in promoting your own temporal comfort, but the rest and indeed the bulk I require you to lay out in promoting the cause for which I bled upon the cross, and which you know lies nearest my heart, even the salvation of immortal souls. To guard you against any breach of trust, I forewarn you that I shall require an account of every farthing at some future period: and at the same time to encourage your zeal in my interests, I promise you a gracious reward for your fidelity, when I call you to account for your stewardship. Be thou faithful unto death,

and I will give thee a crown of life that fadeth not away." Would you not feel both honoured in being the almoner of his bounty, and tremblingly anxious to lay out his money to the best advantage for his cause, that when you gave in your account it might be with joy and not with grief? Would you not be afraid almost to spend any thing upon yourselves, lest in comparison with his interests it should be considered too much? When about to enlarge or beautify your house, or to modernize your furniture, or to go on an excursion of pleasure at his expense, would you not hear a voice from within asking, "Is this the purpose for which the money was entrusted to your care? Does this please Christ now? And will it be a good item in the account at the last day?" Methinks you would grudge any thing for yourselves, beyond absolute necessaries, that you might be able to say at last, "Lord it was all spent for thee." Is this entirely fiction? True it is that Christ has not appeared *personally* to you, for we walk by faith; but he *has* entrusted money to your care to be employed for him. Yes, that property which you call *your own*, is *not* your own, "for *ye* are Christ's," and *all that you have*, is his. And he will require an account of it at the last day.

By such motives as these, professors, I admonish you to liberality. I lay down no proportions of tenths, thirds, or halves; for Christ has not done so. Under the Levitical law every thing was demanded by weight, number, and measure; but it is not so under the more free, and generous, and spiritual dispensation of the gospel. Christ has trusted *his* cause to our love, our honour, our sense of gratitude. Under the legal dispensation, all things taken into account, a Jew's religion could have cost him little less than half his income; and yet some Christians

talk of a *tenth* for theirs. I do not say how much is enough for poorer Christians, but I am sure that for *rich* ones this is a paltry sum to carry to him who gave his *all* for them. Ye rich Christians, read "Mammon." I say it, *read* it, and not only *buy* it. It is become a fashion to purchase it; I wish it may be a fashion to practice its principles. *You* are the people for whom it is especially designed, and therefore lay your souls open to its searching inquiries, and let it expel the sin of covetousness from your hearts. Remember the rule of blessing in proportion as you are blessed; and that, therefore, he whose prosperity flows in upon him by copious streams, but whose liberality is only like drops oozing from a rock, is robbing God, defrauding the world, and rendering it doubtful whether he is a Christian indeed, and in truth. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

And now, dear brethren, take the alarm. Prosperity is a dangerous blessing. It is said of Mr. CECIL, that on being informed one of his congregation had become rich, he called upon him one day and addressed him thus: "Sir, I hear you are in great danger." "In danger of what?" said his friend; "I am not conscious of any danger to which I am exposed." "You are growing rich," continued the faithful minister, "and is not that a dangerous condition?" So sensible was another good minister of this danger, that, on his having a fortune left him, he devoted three days to humiliation and prayer, to be kept from the new perils into which he had been brought. Admit the danger, then. Do not put aside the subject with a light and careless air: this increases the peril ten-fold. The man who is walking on the edge of a precipice, but cannot be prevailed upon to take heed to his steps, is almost sure

to fall over. A constant sense of your peril will arouse you to caution. Do, do consider in how many instances prosperity has been injurious to the souls of men—of men that once stood high in the church as well as in the world. It is the green and flowery mount from which we may have slided down into the bottomless pit; for it has proved to many the occasion of apostacy. And even should it not lead to this, still, without great watchfulness and prayer, without incessant struggling, you will be sure to lose your spirituality, and gain much injury to your soul. In that case, the more you have of earth, the less you will have of heaven; your gain here will be a loss to you there. There are, as I have already said, degrees of glory; higher and lower seats in heaven; gradations of honour, and of capacity for bliss in paradise; and though your worldly-mindedness may not be such as to unchristianize you, yet it may be enough to make you Christians of a low standard, and therefore fit for only one of the lowest stations of the kingdom of God; while, on the other hand, sanctified prosperity may meeten you for one of the highest. Thus your prosperity will extend to both worlds; it will be immortal, and you will be made ruler of ten cities.

Give yourselves, then, to prayer. Call upon God. His grace can be made sufficient for you, and nothing else can. He giveth more grace, and you need more. "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you."

"Remember Lot's wife." Remember the prosperous man, whose goods increased in abundance; but who was cut off in one night from his prospects, his possessions, and his folly. Remember the rich man who was clad in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, but who died, and

in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments; and to whose request for only a drop of cold water, no other answer was given than, "Remember thou *hast had thy consolation.*" May you not pluck the fruits of unsanctified prosperity for ever and ever in hell; but gather the harvest of a well employed abundance into the kingdom of heaven throughout eternity.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PROFESSOR IN ADVERSITY.

It is hard to say which is the more difficult and dangerous effort, to ascend or descend a steep and rocky mountain. In either case, to proceed with safety, is no easy matter. So is it a difficulty with some to decide, whether prosperity or adversity be more perilous to the Christian. Each has its snares, and each requires caution, watchfulness, and prayer. Each brings on a crisis in our religious history, and makes us either better or worse. It is an undoubted fact, that by far the greater number of God's people have been found, hitherto, in the humble vale of poverty, or in the secluded retreats of adversity; a fact, which, in connection with what the Scriptures say, is a strong presumption, that in the judgment of omniscient and infallible wisdom, piety is likely to flourish most in the shade. God could cause the sun ever to shine upon his people, and prevent any cloud from obscuring for a moment his rays; it is not for want of power to make them rich, that he suffers any of his children to be poor. All things are at his disposal and under his direction; he could give them all a patrimony in this world, which would exalt them above their fellows. He could make them all by acquisition, great in fame, and rank, and

wealth—but he does not—and therefore it must be best that he should not. Each of them may look at the cross and say with an apostle, "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" There is no answering that logic: the conclusion is as just as the premises are true. The disproportion between a crumb and a kingdom is not so great as that between a kingdom and God's only-begotten Son. He that hath the Son may infer, with absolute certainty, that he has every thing else, which infinite wisdom sees it best he should have; there is nothing more certain under the heavens, than that infinite love, after having given a man Christ, can withhold nothing else that is for his real good.

How then should a professor conduct himself in adversity, so as to glorify God? By adversity, I intend three classes of persons,—*the poor*—*the unfortunate*—and *the afflicted*. I am aware that the word is usually restricted to the middle class; but if I were to use it in this limited sense, I should exclude many whom I wish to address.

There are some duties which are common to all these three classes alike.

Submission to the will of God is one of them.—By submission, I mean the repression of all repining language, the resistance of all rebellious feeling, and the determined opposition of all hard thoughts of God, as if he had dealt unkindly or severely with us; together with an acquiescence in all he does as right and good. The temper, for instance, which is expressed in such language as this: "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good to him." "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." The grounds of submission are clear views and

a firm belief of God's power, wisdom, and love—such a deep sense of our sins as leads us to say, "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, wherefore then should a man complain, a living man for the punishment of his sins, since he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."—A strong and steady faith in Christ for pardon, peace, and hope—a vivid apprehension of eternal glory—and a settled assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God. These are the grounds of submission, which cannot exist where they are not, and cannot be absent where they are. A murmuring, complaining, fretful, and peevish Christian, whose words approach as near as possible to rebellion against God, disgraces and belies every principle of his profession.

Somewhat of Christian *cheerfulness* should be manifested by all persons in adversity. If they would glorify God; if they would cause the light of their principles to shine forth; if they would adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour; if they would appear different from other men; they must break the silence even of submission with the words of contentment, and if possible with the notes of praise. They must sing like the nightingale, and shine like the glow-worm in the dark. They must rejoice in the Lord, delight themselves in God, repose their aching heart on the covenant of grace, and exult in the assurance that in heaven they have an enduring substance. As they sit amidst the fragments of their broken cisterns, they must be heard singing the words of the prophet, "With joy will I draw water out of the wells of salvation." Thus will they glorify God, when the smile of cheerfulness on their countenance looks like the bow upon the cloud, and they render the dark scene of their sorrows, a means

of displaying the resplendent beauties of the Sun of Righteousness. O, how is God honoured by the Christian in adversity, when all his conduct as well as his words seem to say—"I have lost much, but I still possess infinitely more than I *have* lost, or *can* lose. With Christ as my Saviour, God as my Father, salvation as my portion, and heaven as my home; how can *I* be thought poor or wretched?"

There are also duties peculiar to each of the three classes which I have specified.

1. THE POOR should be contented, and exhibit to all around the power of religion in reconciling them to their situation in life. A large proportion of the Lord's people are in the humbler walks of society. "I have left in the midst of thee," said Jehovah to Jerusalem, "a poor and an afflicted people." Christ seemed to mark *them* out as the objects of his special attention, when he said, "The poor have the gospel preached to them." This shows the benign spirit of the gospel, and distinguishes it from every system of philosophy, or art, and false religion. What have the founders of empires, the teachers of science, or the inventors of religions cared about the poor? Sunk in the low abyss of penury, they lay neglected, no one caring to raise them from the depths of ignorance, vice and misery, to knowledge, virtue, and bliss. Age succeeded to age, and school to school; a thousand sects and systems rose, flourished and fell; but the degradation of the multitude remained. No HOWARD descended to explore their deep, dark, and cheerless dungeon, to ascertain the weight of their chains, to let the light of heaven in upon their rayless abode, or to sweeten their cup of wo, by the cordial of sympathy; till one infinitely greater than HOWARD, and one from whose heart of boundless love, that distinguished philanthrophist

derived its mercy, appeared upon the stage of our world. The Son of God, and Saviour of mankind, when he came down to earth, lighted in the humble vale of poverty, grew up to manhood amidst its privations, drank its bitter waters, chose his apostles from the same station, and gathered his first followers, and founded his church chiefly from among the sons and daughters of penury. Thus, by his example, his conduct, and his benedictions, Christ seemed not only to strip poverty of its terrors, but to invest it with a kind of endearing honour, as long at least, as it is associated with holiness. Consider this, ye poor of the flock. Are you as destitute as Christ was? Can *you* say as *he* did, "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head?" Did he not depend on charity for every thing? His home, his bread, his grave? Shall the disciple think it hard to be as his master? How easily, how speedily, and how delightfully would it pluck the sting from poverty, when it begins to wound you, and cover its imaginary disgrace, when you are in danger of blushing over it, to recollect, that the character of a holy poor man, was the state in which the Lord of life and glory chose to dwell, during his temporary sojourn in our world.

Besides, remember that the Lord hath chosen for you this lot, and he knows your disposition better than you know it yourselves. Some plants thrive best in a poor soil, and sheltered from the sun, as I have already hinted, and you are among the number. In the eye of Omniscient Wisdom, your present privations comport best with the possession of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the enjoyment of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. You are like an heir to an im-

manse estate, whom his father judges it best for his future character and happiness, to keep poor during his minority. Trust in God. "If he *has* loved you so as not to spare his own Son, but delivered him up for you, how shall he not with him freely give you all things?" After that amazing donation, you may expect every thing that would do you good. A thousand worlds compared with that are not as a farthing to a kingdom. Would you be rich for this world, and ruined for the next?—Wealthy in time, to be poor throughout eternity? Would you sell heaven for all the fortunes upon earth? Would you not rather be poor as you are, and poorer too, with religion, than rich as the wealthiest man in the kingdom without it?

Consider what you *have*, what *grace* has given you, though Providence has denied you many things given to others. You have, or will have, all that the love of the Father designed from eternity for his people, all that the death of Christ obtained, all that the Bible promises, all that heaven contains; and is not this enough to satisfy and bless you, without gold and silver, houses and lands? Is not Christ in a cottage, to be infinitely preferred to a palace without him? "*Better is little that a righteous man hath, than the riches of many wicked.*"—Psalm xxxvii. 16. Do you believe this? Then reconcile yourselves to your poverty, and hush every murmuring word, and repress every repining feeling.

Recollect, if you have not the gratification of riches, you have neither their snares nor cares. You mistake, if you suppose, that happiness expands with possession. As to the greater calamities of life, I mean sickness, pain, and death; together with those mental sorrows which are produced by ingratitude and unkindness, by disappointment, envy

and jealousy; these are as heavily laid upon the rich as the poor, and perhaps more so; while all the more substantial enjoyments of our present lot, are as freely bestowed upon the poor as the rich. The poor have health, appetite, sleep, peace of mind, social relationships; the bright sun, the blue sky, the green earth, the balmy air, the cheerful day, the still night, as well as the rich; and in addition, if they are Christians, they have all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ—they possess an interest in him, who is the fountain of all blessedness, and the possessor of heaven and earth; they have a charter to all that is good for them, which cannot be revoked—they are enriched through the operations of the Holy Spirit, and the influence of faith, purifying their hearts, with a temper of mind and disposition, which are the seeds of true happiness—they have the well-grounded prospect of a state beyond the grave, where every source of sorrow shall be dried up, and every spring of joy opened. And is not this enough to comfort them under the privations of poverty?

Let them also remember how short is the term of their destitute state. What a force and a balm are there in the words of the Apostle, "*Let those that weep, be as though they wept not, for* THE TIME IS SHORT." Tears that are so soon to cease for ever may be wiped away with a smile. There remaineth a rest for the people of God. When the labouring man lays down the implements of labour, he knows not that he shall ever be called to resume them. Soon, perhaps sooner than he expects, the flail and the hammer will drop from his hands, to be substituted by the harp of gold, and the palm of victory. How sweet it is to gather up his tools on Saturday evening, and to reflect, "*To-morrow I shall rest all*

day." Let him recollect that the Saturday evening of life is at hand, to be followed by the dawn of a Sabbath, whose sun shall never set. When the labours of the day and its weariness, shall extort an involuntary exclamation, "*How long,*" or when, with a feeling bordering on repining, he shall throw down his instruments of toil, to wipe away the sweat off his moistened brow, let him hear the voice which says to him, "*The end of all things is at hand, when thou shalt sleep in Jesus, and rest from thy labours.*" And oh! how will the privations, and hardships, and sorrows of poverty, prepare for the enjoyment of that fulness of joy, and those pleasures for evermore, which await the Christian at the right hand of God? Extremes magnify each other, and what will the delectable mountains of heaven be, whose tops are ever gilded with celestial glory, to the man who has ascended to them from the gloomy valley which has never been illumined by the sun of worldly prosperity.

Yes, there 's a better world on high,
Hope on thou pious breast;
Faint not thou traveller to the sky,
Thy weary feet shall rest.

The poor should check all feelings of envy, all disposition of ill-will towards the rich, for this of course is contrary to Christian contentment. They should avoid all tendency to misconstrue the actions and misconceive the motives of their wealthier brethren; and should sedulously guard against all those who would excite their prejudices by unfounded insinuations, and stir them up to turbulent discontent and insubordination.

They should endeavour to combine, with a just

self-respect, an equal degree of respect for those whom Providence has raised to higher stations. Conscious that in the sight of God they are upon a perfect level with the richest and the greatest, they should yet so far regard the distinctions of society, as to be respectful, courteous, and submissive towards those who are their superiors in rank and property, though not in nature or in Christian privilege. A forward, bold, obtrusive poor man is certainly no credit to the Christian professor.

II. I now state the duties of the second class, those who in the most specific sense of the term, are in adversity. I mean the UNFORTUNATE, if indeed the word "UNFORTUNATE" ought to be admitted to the vocabulary of a Christian. How numerous is this class, how many are there in this trading country who are continually sliding down from wealth or competence into comparative, or actual poverty. What sudden and painful reverses are some called to experience, and others to witness! What shiftings of property are perpetually going on! And oh, how much is the credit of religion, and the honour of the Christian profession involved in these vicissitudes. How comparatively few descend with honour into the vale below, and dwell there with dignity and grace. How many lose their reputation in losing their fortune. Not that they are designing cheats or determined knaves; but are misled by the deceitfulness of the heart to do many things in endeavouring to avert the impending ruin, which, with whatever specious pretexts they are first prompted and then defended, cannot be justified by the strict rule of Christian integrity. The credit of religion, as I have repeatedly remarked already, has suffered incalculable and irreparable injury in the world's estimation, from the

dishonourable conduct of Christian tradesmen, who have been involved in difficulties; and even from the misconduct of those whose piety could not be reasonably doubted by any that knew them. There is unusual surprise felt when a professor fails. A fine tribute this to religion, as if it contained, which it does, a power to bless in this world, as well as the next; and there is also unusual disgust and reproach expressed when he fails under circumstances unfavourable to his reputation; another tribute to religion, as in itself intended to produce whatsoever things are just, honest, and of good report. Hence, then, it is a matter of indescribable importance that a Christian who is beginning to decline, should make up his mind never, by God's help, to attempt to save himself by sinning against God in violating the least rule of morality; never to prop his falling fortunes by any thing that is contrary to the principles of fair and honourable trading. A professor involved in commercial difficulties is in the most imminent peril. It is the severest trial of his integrity; a kind of martyrdom, and a most difficult one too. His very regard to his reputation, and the credit of religion, are sometimes really amongst the temptations to which he yields in doing what is wrong. He dreads a failure, for he knows that with no serious ground of reproach he shall be suspected by the ignorant, blamed by the censorious, and calumniated by the malicious. To avert a calamity so great, he resorts to means which, though far enough off from downright dishonesty, are still improper and censurable; he adopts various and doubtful experiments for raising money; he borrows of friends with promises of re-payment which he might know, if he reflected for a moment, he has no hope of fulfilling; he draws in the unwary by bargains which

he must be quite sure they would never make if they knew his circumstances; he speculates with part of his little capital, and which in fact is not his, in hope to retain and increase the remainder; and if, while doing all this, conscience suggests, as it sometimes will do, that it cannot be right, he quiets the awakened and troublesome monitor, by the allegation that it is designed to prevent a catastrophe, which, if it occur, will bring certain disgrace upon his profession, but which, if it should be thus averted, will leave all those transactions in concealment. The catastrophe, however, in spite of all these improper expedients comes on, and with it the exposure of what was done to ward it off, and the character and credit of the professor are lost in the wreck, though the salvation of the Christian is secured, yet so as by fire.

I would by no means become the apologist for such conduct. It cannot be defended, but must be condemned; yet I believe it has been pursued by many a man whose heart will be found at the last day, to have been right with God. The great difficulty with an embarrassed tradesman, is to know when to stop. Like a gamester he is led on by the delusive expectation that the next throw will recover all he has lost. In nineteen cases out of twenty, this hope of recovery proves fallacious, and only plunges him deeper into ruin. Unfortunately the present age offers too many expedients by which men of declining prosperity, may endeavour by some sudden effort in speculation to avert the impending stroke, and be saved from bankruptcy. How much better would it be, as soon as they are aware of their perilous situation, to consult their creditors as to the propriety of proceeding, who would thus be made responsible for whatever risks

would be incurred by their continuance. Or, if this be not prudent, as in some cases it may not, how important is it to take counsel with some judicious friend, to whom the *whole* state of their affairs should be laid open. Nothing, however, is more common, in such cases, than for the person who asks a friend's opinion to disclose only *half* the real truth and make a *partial* representation of even *that;* just as clients do who consult an attorney in a bad business, and whom they mislead by making him acquainted with only that part of the case which is in their favour.

A very considerable degree of difficulty arises sometimes, both on the part of a distressed tradesman and his religious friends, on the subject of borrowing and lending money to assist him out of his embarrassments. The Scripture is certainly explicit in its injunctions on this head. Our Lord says, "*From him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*"—Matt. v. 42. This, however, it is plain must be interpreted with a just regard to the rules of prudence. An indiscreet and lavish system of lending, would soon reduce even an affluent professor to ruin, and act as a premium upon imprudence and knavery in others. Yet *there* is the law, and it is also involved in other passages, which speak of our "*bearing one another's burdens,*" and helping one another in difficulty. I believe that one great reason why this rule is so much neglected, is the improper conduct of some who have borrowed when there was no rational prospect of re-payment, and whose failure has not only brought discredit on themselves, but produced a determination on the part of many not to lend to any one. A man who is really in difficulty, ought to be extremely cautious about asking money in a way of loan from friends,

nothing far short of an absolute certainty of being able to return it, should allow him to solicit their aid. He should, of course, lay open to them even the *very worst* of his affairs, that they may be in full possession of all particulars before the advance is made. Christians ought to help one another, but no one ought to put the property of his friends in jeopardy. Much discredit has been thrown on the Christian profession by a neglect of this rule. To save themselves from ruin many have dragged others down with them. It is not that they imposed upon others so much as that they imposed upon themselves. They did not say what they did not believe at the time to be true, but they believed what they ought not to have believed; and are therefore responsible for their practical errors as others are for their doctrinal ones. It is bad policy, as well as bad morality, to jeopardize the property of others, as it often drains the resources which at the time did them no good, but which afterwards would be of considerable service to them. Where assistance is wanted by a suffering brother, whose difficulties cannot be referred to his own imprudence, and who can be effectually served without much risk, such a man ought not to be allowed to sink.

Christian tradesmen, suffer the word of exhortation. Carry your profession with you into your business, and let your character as a tradesman, sustain the honour of your profession. Let the principle of integrity guide you in your shop, and the practice of economy in your house. Avoid, I beseech you, a showy and extravagant style of living. Be not ambitious of obtaining a large house, elegant furniture, a handsome equipage, and a country residence. What are these things to a man whose heart should be above? Much less have

them, or even covet them, till you are quite sure you can pay for them. Do not let the first flush of a precarious prosperity prompt you to launch out into expenses, which you could not be authorized to incur till after a long trial of your success. And then when the tide begins to run, and the ebb has commenced, immediately curtail, and retrench. Do not continue to hold conveniences and luxuries at the risk of your creditors, determined never to relinquish them till they are torn from you, by the strong hand of law. Let no false shame make you afraid of being suspected to be poor. Have an honest principle which makes you determine never to have a single enjoyment at other people's expense, or even risk.

If your adversity has been in any measure induced by any fault of your own, confess it both to God and man. Blind not yourself to your own misconduct. Do not shut the windows of the soul, and resolve that no light of conviction shall come in, to reveal what is wrong. Struggle not against public opinion; much less resist the expostulations, or despise the censures of your brethren. Your peace, and honour, and safety, all depend upon an ingenuous confession. The man who says, and says it with a magnanimous frankness, "I have done wrong," rises as he sinks; is exalted by his humiliation, and manifests a remaining power of inward piety and principle, which bursting forth from his soul, like the sun dispersing the mist which had for a season veiled his lustre, scatters the cloud with which for a while he had enveloped his character.

But I now proceed to give some directions to those who are in adversity and who may not be conscious of any special fault, to which they can look, as the cause of their misfortunes.

If your troubles have been brought upon you by the imprudence or injustice of others, neither allow your minds to dwell upon their conduct with resentful feelings, nor to stop in the contemplation of second causes. God has permitted it, or they could not have done it. He employs wicked men, and even the wickedness of the wicked, for the fulfilment of his purposes towards his children.

Act not atheistically in your affliction, and complain and fret as if your adversity was the result of chance, but let it be seen that you believe in the doctrine of Providence.

Manifest a dignified composure, a calm and tranquil mind, that can stand the shock of these storms without having your confidence in God uprooted. It is said of the righteous "*he shall not be moved. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.*"

Watch against a despairing, reckless temper; a disposition to give up all for lost; a feeling of hopelessness, as if you were irrevocably doomed to adversity, and it were useless to make further attempts to gather up into any other scheme the fragments of your broken fortunes. "If thou faint in the day of adversity thy strength is small:" and what is this despondency but fainting? It is always too soon to despair in this world, in reference either to temporal or spiritual things. Earth is the region of hope. The severest part of winter is just before spring; the tide is lowest just before it begins to rise; the break of day issues from the deepest gloom of midnight. Job sunk from a mansion to a dunghill, and then rose from a dunghill to a nobler mansion still. Hope in God; his best gifts of an earthly nature may be yet to come. Banish despondency. Be of good courage:—

wait on the Lord, and he shall strengthen thy heart.

Besides, consider what mercies are still left.—Set one thing over against another; God does, and so ought you. "All is lost," wrote FRANCIS I. of France, to his mother, after the battle of Pavia, "but our honour." Christian integrity, which still remains with you, is worth infinitely more than all you have lost. You have health, friends, reason, still. But you have richer blessings left than these. Perhaps your children are with you in Christ, and travelling by your side to heaven. You have all the blessings of grace in hand, and all the blessings of glory in hope. You have lost your property, but not your salvation. Earth has fallen from your left hand, but your right lays hold on heaven.—You are poorer for time, but perhaps it is only to be richer for eternity. Be comforted, ALL IS WORKING TOGETHER FOR GOOD; you cannot tell how; that is not your business; it is God's to say how, yours to believe it *will* be so.

Watch and strive against a spirit of envy. Perhaps in your descent into the vale of adversity, you have passed some on their way, going up the hill of prosperity. Pray for grace to rejoice with them that rejoice; this is the best way to make them weep with you that weep. We ought to cast our own cares upon God, and empty our hearts as much as possible of our own sorrows, that there might be room in them for both the joys and sorrows of others. Envy will make the wounds of our mind fester and mortify, and add something of the torments of hell to the trials of earth. It is poison in the cup of wo. And it is of importance also that you should avoid a jealous and suspicious temper;

a constant susceptibility of offence. Your situation will produce a tendency to this. Aware that you have sunk in property, you will be apt to think you have sunk in esteem and importance, and that in consequence of this you are slighted and neglected. This will induce a petulant, querulous, and misanthropic temper; destructive of your peace, and injurious to your profession. I admit that every man in whom dwelleth the spirit of Christian charity, will be doubly assiduous and watchful, not to aggravate the sorrows of adversity, by making you feel that you have sunk; but unintentional and only apparent neglects will sometimes occur, which, if you are not vigilant, and blessed with an eminent degree of humility and meekness, will chafe and irritate your mind, and prevent your light from shining in darkness.

It should be the study, the endeavour, and the prayer of every Christian, to make his adversity subservient to his growth in grace: and the depression of his circumstances, the means of his moral and spiritual elevation. In many cases it *has* been so, and spectators have been delighted and astonished to witness a grand and beautiful development of character, where they supposed that even the principle of piety scarcely lived before. That which looked all earthly matter, and impure mixture, when subjected to the searching test of fire, glowed in the furnace, and ran forth a stream of pure and liquid gold. Yes, the adhesions of pride, worldly-mindedness, and a harsh severity of temper which had encrusted over, hidden and disfigured the character, were separated, and the profession so imperfect, and even doubtful before, came forth exhibiting not only the loftier graces of faith and

submission, but even the minuter beauties of holiness, in a spirit of humility, meekness and affection.

Nor ought I to omit, that professors singularly glorify God in adversity, by feeling, and causing it to be *seen* that they feel it to be one of its bitterest sorrows, that they have been the means of injuring others. They have unintentionally, but still materially, perhaps, involved many in loss. To see a man reckless of the property, and regardless of the misfortunes of his friends, misfortunes of which he has been the cause, is not honesty, much less honour, or Christianity. It should be the aim and determination of every Christian, that by the most unwearied labour, the most persevering diligence, and the most rigid economy, he may at length pay every creditor to the full amount of his demands. A *legal* clearance, is not a *moral* one. It is a disgraceful sight, even for a man of the world, to be seen rising out of adversity, and living in splendour, while his creditors have not received, probably one half or one quarter of their just due; such a person may not be called a rogue, but who will call him an honest man?

III. To the third class, I mean those who are IN AFFLICTION from any of the various causes of human sorrow, whether it be personal or relative trouble, it is not necessary I should say much in addition to what I have already advanced.

Let them restrain their grief, and not be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow. An excessive degree of distress, a refusal to be comforted, a disposition to nourish grief, is a temper dishonourable to a professor, who, in the darkest and dreariest scenes of human life, ought not to appear like the men who are without God and without hope. PA-

TIENCE must have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. RESIGNATION must not only suppress the murmur, but dictate words of confidence and peace. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," must be your declaration, as well as your purpose. FAITH, strong, steady faith, which cleaves closer to Christ, in proportion as other things fail, must be in exercise. HOPE, as the anchor of your soul, must keep your little bark safe amidst the storm. MEEKNESS must put forth all its power and beauty in preventing peevishness, and producing a sweetness of temper in the midst of perplexing and ruffling circumstances. ASSURANCE *that all things are working together for good*, should bear the soul above the low and cloudy horizon of present trials, and enable it to descry eternal sunshine beyond the storm, and rendered the brighter by the gloom, from the midst of which it is contemplated. While at the same time, a deep concern should be manifested for a sanctified use of every affliction. Anxiety should be manifested to glorify God in the fires, to have every corruption mortified, and every grace strengthened; to die to earth, and live for heaven.

Thus may the various classes of Christians in adversity, support, adorn, and recommend the religion they profess; and enjoy consolation in their trouble, derived from the consideration that their affliction has yielded something for the advancement of God's cause, and the manifestation of his glory in the world; while it has been ripening them for that blessed state, where they shall "be before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light

on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—Rev. vii. 15—17.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CONDUCT OF PROFESSORS AWAY FROM HOME.

REAL religion is not merely an occasional act, but a permanent habit, resulting from an internal principle: a principle so fixed as to constitute a moral nature, and so steadily operative, as to form an unchanging character. A real Christian is a Christian always, everywhere, and for all companies: he carries with him his piety wherever he goes, as an integral part of himself. It is not like his dress which may be continually altered, or varied to suit his situation, occupation, and society. He *needs* it everywhere, he *loves* it everywhere, and is commanded to let it be *seen* everywhere. Is this, however, invariably remembered and acted upon by professors? Is there not too much of a chameleon kind of religion, that takes its hue from surrounding objects?—a flexible, yielding, easy kind of piety, which can accommodate itself to circumstances, by little sacrifices of principle and consistency? This is seen most conspicuously in the conduct of professing Christians, when away from home. While in the midst of their connexions, they cannot go far astray without its being noticed; and indeed, the temptations to wander from the line of strict propriety, are there neither numerous nor strong; the eyes of their religious friends and of their pastor are upon them;

they would be missed from the house of God, and seen, by those who know them, in the company of the gay, and in the amusements of the fashionable. Hence they are not so much in danger in these circumstances, as when removed by any cause from beneath the notice of those, who, by office, relationship, or affection, are called to watch over them.—Temptations in various ways assail them when *from* home, from which they are sheltered *at* home.

Sometimes professors are *visiting in gay and worldly families;* in such a situation they require great caution and courage, neither to conceal nor compromise their principles. Such visits are undesirable, and are not to be *chosen*, but submitted to merely as matter of necessity. There is nothing in such a situation congenial with the spirit of piety; and they can rarely maintain their consistency, and at the same time give or receive pleasure. Still, however, they cannot always avoid such intercourse, and when they are under some kind of necessity to enter into it, they should be well aware of their difficulties, and pray for grace to be carried through them with honour and a good conscience. They should recollect that they will be both watched as to their consistency, and tried as to their steadfastness, and will need much firmness and circumspection. It is demanded of them by their allegiance to Christ, that while all the rules of politeness and good breeding are observed, there be no concealment of their profession, no joining in amusements from which they conscientiously abstain at home, and no attendance upon heretical worship out of compliment to the host; but on the contrary, an inflexible, dignified and courteous maintenance of their separation from the world, their Christian habits, and religious observances. This is one of

their opportunities for confessing Christ. I once spent a few days in a family, in which there was visiting at the same time a young lady, who belongs to a society of Christians that hold it unlawful to associate in any act of worship, either public or domestic, with those who differ from them in ever so comparatively slight a matter. I was struck with the unyielding firmness and unvarying consistency, with which she maintained her uncharitable and exclusive creed. When we assembled for family prayer, she withdrew to her chamber; when we rose to give thanks at our meals, she kept her seat, and gave plain indication that even in that short act of domestic piety, she took no part. I ought to observe, that there was nothing of obtrusiveness, contempt, or sullenness in her deportment; but certainly an unbroken consistency in which she is worthy of imitation, by all who profess a more charitable system. It requires, I allow, great moral courage, when receiving the rites of hospitality, to separate ourselves in some things which they consider quite harmless, from those who are aiming to contribute to our gratification; and when called to exercise this act of self-denial, we should do it with due regard to all the laws of courtesy, and with such gentle conscientiousness, as will not give offence to any really polite person.

Professors may sometimes be thrown for awhile, by the ever-varying circumstances of life, into a town, or village, where there are none like-minded with themselves in religious sentiment and feeling, and where they are surrounded only by worldly people. Of course such a situation should never be chosen, except it be to carry into it the means of grace; but it may be, in some cases, the result of circumstances not to be controlled. In such a scene

of moral darkness, a Christian, instead of extinguishing the light of his profession, or putting it under a bushel, should cause it, if possible, to shine with a clearer and more public brightness. He should let it be seen at once, that he fears God, and that, however he may be disposed to exchange the civilities of life, and the courtesies of neighbourhood, he can do nothing contrary to the strictness of his religion. He must be content to be regarded as precise, narrow-minded, and unfashionable, and never defend himself against the sneers of the gay, by putting aside a single practice which his conscience dictates. Nay, he must go farther, and endeavour, I repeat, to introduce those means of grace, which he does not find in the place of his residence. He must carry his light with him, not only to display it by consistent piety, but to diffuse it by holy zeal. In such ways as prudence shall dictate, and opportunity shall allow, he must be "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."—And should not the place be *quite* destitute of the means of grace, and the people of God, but contain a few poor disciples of Christ, and some lowly tabernacle of genuine piety, instead of being ashamed of these humble manifestations of the kingdom of the Lord, he must follow the Saviour, though it be as the shepherds did at the nativity, into an outhouse, or as the disciples did after the ascension, into an attic. To forsake the cause of evangelical religion, because it is seen in its primitive poverty, and to associate only with the ungodly, because they are rich and fashionable, is to abandon the church and follow the world.

How often and how forcibly has it been submitted to those rich Christians, and to others of

moderate wealth, who are retiring from the cares of trade, to the calm seclusion of private life, whether it is not their duty in the selection of the place of their retreat and repose, to be guided by a view to usefulness, rather than a desire of gratification. One of the first objects thought of by such persons generally is, a popular preacher, and a genteel congregation; a situation where their Sabbath days shall be delightfully occupied by the good sermons of the former, and their week days by the intercourse of the latter. I know that it is a strong temptation to those who can command the gratification, to place themselves within the magic circle of some eminent preacher's ministerial labours, and the *elegantly pious* society which he has drawn around him;—but how noble, how heroic, how Christ-like, is the spirit which causes a man in such circumstances to say, "God has blessed my industry, and raised me to an independence of the toils and anxieties of business, and I am now retiring to spend the remainder of my days in unmolested quiet. Where shall I choose my residence, and pitch my tent? Shall I select some paradisaic spot, where beautiful scenery shall perpetually feast my senses? Shall I repair to some resort of the gay and the fashionable? Shall I follow the music of some eloquent preacher, and regale myself continually with the display of sacred genius? No. I will forego all this, and settle where I can best serve that God who has blessed me with all things richly to enjoy. I will glorify that blessed Saviour, who has bought me with his blood, and whose I am, with all I have. He is my Lord, and I am his servant, and I must settle where I can best serve HIM. I will go, therefore, where his cause is weak, that I might be the honoured instrument of strengthening it. True it is, this will

require self-denial, for I cannot expect to hear a distinguished preacher, or find a numerous and genteel congregation in a small country town; but am I not a disciple of him, who prescribed the cross as the condition of receiving me among the number of his followers? What an honour and a happiness will it be, with which to gild the evening of my days, if I should be the instrument of supporting and encouraging some faithful minister of Christ, and building up some low and needy church of the living God. I follow the cloud, therefore, to the scene of *usefulness*." O give me that man's reward in the day of account, the smile, and the "well done, good and faithful servant," which he will then receive from his Lord, and I would resign all the gratification to be derived from listening for ages, if it were possible, to the sermons of the greatest of all preachers. And why is there not more of this self-denial?—Why do not wealthy Christians act more upon such principles as these? Have they not *nominally* at least consecrated themselves and their wealth to God? Is zeal for the cause of Christ, compassion for immortal souls, no part of their duty? Is *absenteeism* never found in the Church of the Redeemer, as well as in the sister kingdom? Are not many away from *their* country, the places that claim them, because they were born there, or have property there, or could do good there? Ye unemployed Christians, who have thrown off the shackles of trade, "the world is all before you where to choose," make Providence your guide, and follow the cry of souls that are perishing for lack of knowledge.

It sometimes happens, that the members of our churches *leave home in the capacity of female servants, apprentices, and shopmen*; and are placed

in families, and surrounded by companions that make no profession of religion. Such a situation, presents one of the most trying and severe ordeals, through which a professor in modern times is called to pass. All the countenance, and watchfulness, and assistance they had been accustomed to receive from parents, companions, or minister, perhaps from all these together, is suddenly withdrawn, and in all the feebleness and timidity of a young Christian, they are exposed to the curious gaze, the ignorant astonishment, the unconcealed sneer, or the embittered enmity of those who are not only strangers to religion, but enemies too. In such a situation, there is not a single individual but what is silently or openly opposed to this young disciple of Christ; who, cut off from *some* of the means of grace, and nearly if not quite the whole of ministerial supervision, has to sustain almost daily, the rude assault, or subtle attack upon his principles. He is like a lamb in the midst of wolves; an alien surrounded by those who are evil affected towards both his country and his sovereign. O, how much grace does he need to keep him faithful? What but omnipotence can preserve him? Where it *can* be avoided, young Christians should not go, or be sent in such situations. But servants and shopmen cannot always, though in many cases they can, choose their situation; and where no alternative is open to them, and they must go into temptation, let them watch unto prayer, and, for their encouragement, let them recollect that he who kept Lot pure even in Sodom, can uphold *their* integrity where there is every thing to pull it down. Consider your situation; there you are the representative of real religion, of Christ, of God himself in one sense, in a place where they are not known. Make no secret of your piety, but let it be seen in

all its purity, power, and consistency. Be firm, yield nothing to the rage or ridicule of those around you. Be consistent, and let it be seen that you act from conscience and not from caprice. Be good-natured, kind, obliging, and thus conciliate to *yourself*, that affection which you cannot win to your *piety*, and then your piety will be borne with, for the sake of the loveliness with which it is associated. Pray for divine help, and tremble lest you should do any thing to excite, as many have done, a prejudice against the religion which you profess. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, that fadeth not away."

Travellers have sometimes a difficult part to act, and are exposed to great temptation; especially such as are regularly employed in a way of business, and who are a great part of their time away from home. The company they meet with at inns, their usual places of sojourn, is generally such as puts their consistency to a test. It is true, there is some improvement in the habits of those who are of this class, inasmuch as education has, in some measure, refined men's taste, and subdued the grossness of vice; but with every abatement of this kind, it will be admitted by all who are acquainted with the facts of the case, that a traveller's room is not the place where piety often finds any thing congenial with itself: the drinking, and card playing; the filthy discourse, and the angry debating which are but too often found there, require, on the part of a professor of religion, much moral courage, and well-fixed principles, sustained by divine grace, to escape the snare. To some young men, who once bade fair to be respectable, the situation has proved an occasion of ruin for both worlds; and even to those who have been long and

deeply rooted in their profession, it has been a severe and painful trial of their principles; where it has not destroyed their consistency, it has been a constant affliction to their minds. How watchful and circumspect ought a Christian to be in such a situation, in his table habits, in his general conversation, in his whole conduct; how careful to avoid the irritation of debate on the subject of politics, or on the questions of trade; how unwilling to provoke, or to be provoked; how firm, yet how gentle; how pious, yet how courteous and gentlemanly; how observant of the Sabbath; how bold, and fearless, and unconcealed in his profession of reverence for religion in all its institutes, and all its requirements! Such a man, maintaining his consistency with kindness, calmness, and dignity; bearing, with unruffled serenity of temper, the taunts and sneers of the witling and scoffer, will soon silence the tongues of the scorner, even where he does not subdue his heart to the obedience of faith. It would be well for such persons to make themselves well acquainted with the evidences of Christianity, and also the arguments and the cavils of infidels, that, on suitable occasions, they may be prepared to meet and vanquish objections to revelation. I believe there is much flippant and shallow skepticism often to be found in a traveller's room. A Christian, whose occupation calls him into such company, should always carry about with him a volume on the evidences of his faith, that he may be qualified to instruct the ignorant, stop the mouths of gainsayers, and relieve the perplexed; and thus aim to do good on his journeys. This he should also endeavour to effect in other ways, as opportunity may present itself, by persuading, for instance, his companions to accompany him to the house of

God. But, O! how much grace is needful for such arduous and often self-denying consistency!

There are also *travellers for pleasure*, as well as for business; and they too have their temptations; temptations which they have not always the courage and virtue to resist. Excursions for pleasure, now become so common, even where they do not extend beyond the United Kingdom, and, when made under the most favourable circumstances, are not usually found to be very conducive to spiritual improvement. The constant succession and survey of beautiful scenery and new objects of interest, do not always lead the mind, "through nature up to nature's God," nor produce that pious frame of mind, which led the Psalmist to say in holy rapture, as he gazed on the beauties of creation, "*My meditation* OF THEE *shall be sweet.*" The excitation of the mind often prevents, instead of aiding, reflection; and the curiosity kept on the full stretch of expectation or gratification, too often represses the tranquil exercises of faith and hope; while the hurry and fatigue of each day's locomotion, leave but little leisure or inclination for the duties of the closet. The senses are so luxuriously occupied, with the things that are seen and temporal, as to flatten the desires of the soul after communion with God, and to suspend her intercourse with things unseen and eternal. Thus many a Christian has returned from a journey of pleasure, rather carnalized than spiritualized by what he has seen. This, I am aware, is rather the abuse of travelling, than its necessary effect, and does not *always* happen; and even where it does, the injurious influence is generally only temporary. Be it so; but let us ever be anxious to guard our souls against the snare: the best way of doing this, is to make it matter of prayer before we set out, that we may be

kept from evil, and then most conscientiously to seek as we wander from place to place, that we may not be permitted to wander from God.

A Christian should get good from every thing, and if his mind were as spiritual as it should be, his excursions would be among the all things that work together for this. And as he ought to seek to *get* good, so ought he seek to *do* it. That tour will be a subject of delightful reminiscence in heaven, and a source of gratitude through eternity, on which we can look back, as the means of saving a soul from death, and converting a sinner from the error of his ways. This may be sought by various methods; some have been converted by the conversation of a fellow-traveller in a stage-coach, or steam-packet; others by means of a religious tract given to them; and others by means still more casual. One day as FELIX NEFF was walking in a street in the city of Lausanne, he saw, at a distance, a man whom he took for one of his friends. He ran up behind him, tapped him on the shoulder before looking in his face, and asked him, "*What is the state of your soul, my friend?*" The stranger turned; NEFF, perceived his error, apologized, and went his way. About three or four years afterwards, a person came to NEFF, and accosted him, saying, he was indebted to him for his inestimable kindness. NEFF did not recognize the man, and begged he would explain. The stranger replied, "Have you forgotten an unknown person, whose shoulder you touched in a street in Lausanne, asking him, 'How do you find your soul?' It was I; your question led me to serious reflection, *and now I find it is well with my soul.*" This proves what apparently small means may be blessed of God for the conversion of sinners, and how many opportunities for doing good we are

all continually letting slip, and which thus pass irrecoverably beyond our reach. One of the questions which every Christian should propose to himself on setting out upon a journey is, "*What opportunities shall I have to do good?*" And one of the points on which he should examine himself on his return, is, "*What opportunities have I lost?*" No one should go from home without a good stock of religious tracts; and it would, in many cases, be proper for those who are in the habit of conducting extempore prayer at home, and who have courage and an easy command of language, to invite the residents of the inns where they pass the night, to join them in an act of solemn worship.

Foreign excursions require still more watchfulness and care, not to fall into temptation. Those who travel on the continent of Europe, a practice becoming exceedingly common, had need look well to the state of their hearts, and to their outward conduct. Cut off, perhaps, in many instances from public worship, either because they do not understand the language, or because they find nothing but Popery, they are exposed to the dangers of mis-spending the Sabbath, or, at any rate, of losing the quickening influence of public ordinances; and that in circumstances in which they most need it. Nor is this all. Wishing to see the country which they have taken so much trouble to visit, in all its phases, they frequent places which they would not venture to approach at home. Have not American professors been seen at our horse-races and theatres? And have not both English and American Christians been seen at the operas in Paris, and at Versailles on the Sabbath, to see the gardens and the waterworks of the palace? If these travellers were to keep a journal of all they see and do, away from

home, would it do to be read *at* home, for the edification of their Christian brethren?

But what shall be said of the conduct of some professors at our WATERING-PLACES? It has become almost one of the necessaries of life to Englishmen, to pay a summer or autumnal visit to the coast, or to one of our inland places of resort. To say that this is wrong in those who can afford to pay for it, is certainly not my intention. That many purchase the trip at other people's expense, is an undoubted fact; for they who have been seen dashing away one year at Brighton, or Cheltenham, have been seen the next year in the gazette. Tradesmen, and even *Christian* tradesmen too, have ruined themselves, and plunged their families into poverty and distress, by habits of expense and idleness, acquired by this annual excursion to the sea. The taste of the age is for luxurious gratification, and it is certainly *one* of these luxuries to while away a month amidst the beauties of the coast, or the gay throng of a fashionable lounging place. But to do this without ample means of paying for it, is to act dishonestly as a man, and most disgracefully as a Christian.

I will suppose, however, that there is no lack of wealth, and that the professor can command the gratification, without putting other people's property in jeopardy; still, are not his spendings for this enjoyment, out of all due proportion with his donations to the cause of Christ? When did he ever give, in one amount, to any religious object, what he gives, in one amount, for his treat to his family to a watering-place? Nay, put together all that he gives to the cause of the Lord for *a whole year*, and does it equal what he spends upon one excursion? How often does he turn away a claimant, sent to him in the name of Jesus, with the excuse that he has no-

thing to spare? Perhaps he says this, just after he has been lavishing tens, or scores, of pounds, in riding into the country, or sailing on the sea, and luxuriating in other ways on the shore. When a world is perishing, and immortal souls are sinking daily in crowds to perdition, a Christian should look, with grudging eye, on almost every shilling he spends in luxury.

But let it be granted, that professors are liberal in the use of their property for the cause of humanity and religion, and that they can, in all consistency, spend a few pounds a year in recreation, a case that often occurs;—still, are there no perils for piety in a watering-place? Temptations abound everywhere, entering like a poisoned atmosphere into every place, but surely no one acquainted with the subject will deny, that they are found in greater number and force in those places, which fashion has set apart for relaxation and amusement. The sudden transition from employment to idleness, is rarely friendly to habits of devotion. It might indeed be supposed, that the Christian, finding himself released from the demands of business, and obtaining thus a respite from the urgent cares of secular pursuits, would hail with delight, a season for meditation and prayer, and convert his absence into one long, sweet Sabbath for his soul, to enjoy communion with his God. But does experience prove that the expectation is well founded? Perhaps "the soft dominion of perfect idleness," and the opportunity for luxurious repose, are more unfriendly to the cultivation of piety, than even the ceaseless round of worldly occupations. We then lounge away our time, without either glorifying God, or benefiting our fellow-creatures. "If a moralist were justified in saying, that but few individuals know how to take a walk, the Christian

preacher is certainly warranted in affirming, that but few, even among consistent Christians, know how to spend a month from home." The mixed society to be found in such haunts of pleasure, the amusements which are resorted to, and the general air of dissipation which pervades the whole scene, are all uncongenial with the spirit of piety, which flourishes best in silence and the shade. If, in the crowded city, men appear as if they lived to get wealth by labour, at a watering-place they look as if it were the object of existence to spend it in pleasure; in either case, religion seems to be banished from their minds. "At a fashionable watering-place," says a competent witness on such a subject, "the incentive to a blameless deportment, arising from the observation of their religious connexions at home, is entirely wanting; and multitudes, I am sorry to believe, take advantage of its absence. Indulging a hope that they are unknown, or unregarded, they make religion bow to convenience, while every solicitation of pleasure assumes an imperative character, and is obeyed, though, at the same moment, the sanctuary of God invites, and conscience remonstrates. They seem studiously to avoid all intercourse with those who belong to their own, or any other religious persuasion. Thus they lay themselves open to associates of another description. Not choosing to be recognized as the self-denying, humble followers of the Saviour, they place themselves without the pale of the green pastures, which he, as the Good Shepherd, has provided for his own flock. The world considers them as its own, and they appear infinitely careful to prevent a detection of the mistake. The facilities of communication with all sorts of persons, are, in such places, likewise numerous and great. Formal introductions are seldom necessary, and ac-

quaintances are made for the season, which, however respectable, as to their situation in life, are so far from making a profession of religion themselves, that they cordially despise it in others." *

It is indeed to be feared that some professing Christians, when they set out on their summer's retreat, leave their religion at home in order that nothing may interrupt their pursuit or enjoyment of pleasure. It is true they do not turn away from the house of God on the Sabbath, but where are they at the time of the weekly sermon or prayer-meeting? "A weekly sermon or prayer-meeting, indeed," they are ready to exclaim, "at a watering-place! Why, who ever thinks of such a thing? Surely it is enough to attend to those things at home." Is this a question for a *professor* to ask? Does he in such a situation less *need* the influence of such means? No, perhaps, it will be said, but he is not much disposed for them. Very true, he is not: and a plain proof it is of the dissipating tendency of such scenes, and the pernicious influence they exert in disturbing the habits and diminishing the power of personal godliness. Some of our more fashionable professors, doubtless, would feel a little ashamed to be seen by some of the gay acquaintances they have lately made, coming from the lowly place "where prayer is wont to be made," or from the still lowlier company of those who make it. It might be asked, if some are not more frequently seen at the Sunday

* "The Temptations of a Watering-Place;" a Sermon preached in 1835, at Brighton, by Dr. STYLES, who was then resident there. This is a most valuable discourse, and ought to be kept constantly in print, and widely circulated, as a Tract which might be of great service to many professors of religion. Dr. STYLES, and all other ministers located at Watering-Places, could tell us strange tales.

evening promenade or on the cliffs, than at the week-day services. And yet, perhaps, these persons are very regular at home, but have not strength of principle enough to withstand the current of temptation abroad. Many have gone to places of fashionable resort to have their profession lastingly injured; and some to lose it altogether. They commenced a retrograde course in religion from that day when they went joyfully and thoughtlessly to the coast in search of recreation. Surely, surely, then, it cannot be thought unseasonable or unnecessary to raise a warning voice, and to make it loud and strong when it is becoming increasingly prevalent among professors, to seek in this species of gratification, a temporary release from the dull cares of home, and the plodding pursuits of business.

I cannot close this chapter to more advantage than by a quotation from Dr. STYLES' Sermon.

"The man who fears God, while he sees others idle, worldly, and selfish, will consider how he may actively be employed in promoting the divine glory. Every place, he will say, shall be the better for my presence. I will be the same character everywhere, and in all circumstances: I must act as

'Ever in my great task-master's eye:'

He beholds me. I cannot flee from his presence, and if I would, how ungrateful, how sinful would be the attempt! That presence has been my solace in affliction, my support in difficulty, my defence in danger. Why should I wish to escape from it now? I am a stranger, and unknown, but my 'light is to shine before men.' Let me choose for my companions the righteous, who are the excellent of the

earth. Let me inquire what benevolent and religious institutions already exist, that I may forward them to the best of my ability. Can I not suggest others that may easily be established, and thus live to the glory of God, and the good of my fellow-creatures? Let me countenance the ministers of Christ, and assist them by my prayers and example, to stem the torrent of abounding iniquity, and as far as I can, to check the subtle operation of a worldly temper in a situation so full of danger. O! if our professedly religious visitors, and our residents of the same description, were influenced by such a spirit, what an awful glory would beam from the sanctuary! What a stream of holy light would shed its influence around, carrying irresistible evidence of the truth of religion, illustrating its unrivalled excellence, and proclaiming its infinite importance! A strong line of distinction would thus be drawn between the world and the church. The inconsistencies of Christians would no longer be the jest of the libertine, the scoff of the vain, and the text of the infidel. Ministers, surrounded with a numerous audience, would not have to mourn the inefficiency of their labours, nor to weep in secret that all their efforts are frustrated, by the captivations and the follies of a world that passeth away. That all this may be prevented, let those who 'name the name of Christ,' both visitors and stated inhabitants, ponder well the peculiar temptations and snares, which it is their duty, and will be their happiness, to avoid. If they are disposed to think of them lightly, to imagine that they offer only innocent gratifications, and that to view them as dangerous, and to condemn them as sinful, is neither justified by reason, nor required by Scripture; such persons have yet to imbibe the spirit of Christianity, have yet to learn the nature of holiness. It is evi-

dent, that however they may be versed in the doctrines and precepts of the sacred volume, there is one important passage which describes the essence and pronounces the eulogy of vital religion, to which they are utter strangers, and which they have not at present the moral capacity to understand, namely, 'Blessed is the man that *feareth always*.'"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BACKSLIDING PROFESSOR.

THERE are three stages of departure from God—*spiritual declension—actual backsliding*—and *final apostacy*. They are intimately connected, and lead on, unless stopped by divine grace, from one to the other. There have been many persons in these states in every age of the church: there are some now. Our most solemn attention is required for such a subject. Professors are continually falling away from Christ, some only in heart, others openly in conduct; some partially and for a season, others totally and for ever. The hopes of pastors and churches are continually receiving the bitterest disappointment from the relapses of those who "*did run well.*" Like the blossoms in the spring, for a time they excited the most pleasing anticipations, but a blight succeeded, the blossom went up as dust, and the root appeared to be rottenness. The present chapter will include a consideration of the two first stages only.

DECLENSION IN RELIGION, means a diminution of its vigour at the heart; a loss of the power of godliness, or, to use a scriptural phrase, "a leaving of our first love." We have a very expressive description of such a state of soul in our Lord's address to the church of Sardis, "*Strengthen the things that*

remain, that are ready to die." Religion was not all gone, but it was nearly so; only a little remained, and that was ready to expire. This is a very common case now. There is no immorality; no open sin; but an utter decay of religious affection. The whole amount of piety that is left, is cold, heartless, dead formality. The fundamental doctrines and precious truths of the Gospel, though not renounced, are not relished and fed upon with that eager appetite, keen relish, and exquisite zest which they once were, and they can be very well spared from sermons, if their loss is supplied by displays of eloquence and the flowers of rhetoric—the means of grace, though not neglected, are mere forms, imparting no quickening power, and yielding no spiritual enjoyment—religious affections of peace, joy, love, delight in God, and hope of heaven, are almost extinguished—the vigour of watchfulness, spirituality of mind, and the severity of mortification are relaxed, under the idea that so much strictness in religion is not necessary—the company of the righteous is forsaken, and their conversation insipid—the tenderness of the conscience is blunted, and little sins of temper, of trade, of the heart and the tongue, are committed with far less repugnance than formerly—besetting sins, once nigh well subdued, acquire fresh life and power—and, in short, religion has lost its hold upon the mind, the heart, and conscience, as an elevating, sanctifying, and satisfying reality. Delight in God, the love of Christ, the joyful hope of heaven, have well nigh ceased.

Still, as I would not distress the humble and timid disciple, I would observe, that we are not to conclude that religion is declining, merely because our feelings are not so violent and flashy as they once were. If there be a growth in humility and meekness, in ten-

derness of conscience and self-denial, in a sense of the value of Christ, and in dependance upon the Spirit, there is no declension in piety, although there may be less of vivid emotion than there once was; just as there is no decay of strength in the human frame, where the sprightliness and efflorescence of youth are gone, if the grave robustness of manhood remains. Nor should the aged believer, mistake the decay of nature for the decline of grace. He hears, he prays, he reads, he remembers, and enjoys with less ability than he once did; but this is the effect of old age, and not of backsliding. The plant of righteousness seems to droop, but it is because the prop that sustained it has given way. The gracious Redeemer will make the same excuse in this case, as he once did for his slumbering disciples, that "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Unhappily, for many, a state of declension exists in their souls without their being aware of it. "Strangers have devoured his strength," said God, when speaking of Israel, "and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not."—Hos. vii. 9. So it is with professors, they are in a state of decay, and yet are not sufficiently aware of the awful fact. It may be worth while to inquire into the causes of this self-ignorance.

1. *The natural consequence of decay whether of body or mind is a proportionate insensibility.* The old man is not so sensible of his accumulating infirmities as those around him are. He scarcely remembers what he *was*, and is but imperfectly aware of what he *is*. So it is with the declining Christian, his heart is hardening, his conscience becoming more dull, and his spiritual perception more dim. A totally unregenerate state is death, a state

of absolute insensibility, and in proportion as we lose the vitality of religion, we return or approximate to that state.

2. *Declension is gradual.* It is so in the human frame as age advances, and it is so in religion also. If we passed from the vigour of youth to the decrepitude of age, how visible would be the transition, and how insupportable too; but it is so slowly made as to be imperceptible, and even tolerable. It is thus with piety, decay is usually so gradual as to be perceived only by a comparison of distant periods, an exercise, which the backslider is rarely disposed to carry on. He goes back step by step. He first loses the glow of holy affection; then the spontaneousness of spiritual thoughts; then the tenderness of an enlightened conscience; and then the consistency of religious conduct. Private prayer is neglected, then family devotion, and lastly social religion. From neglect of duties, he goes on to the commission of sins. Yet he was at first quite unaware of any deterioration.

3. Self-ignorance is often the result of *a neglect of the duty of self-examination.* Many seem to think, that religion is of so hardy a nature, that when once planted in the soul, like some weed in the desert, or shrub upon the mountain, *it must* flourish without care or culture. On the contrary, it is a tender exotic of the hot-house, that requires the constant examination, and most devoted care of the gardener to keep it alive, much more to make it grow. How few set apart seasons for close and diligent inspection of their hearts; and who can wonder, then, that piety should be declining without their knowing it? Would it be a matter of surprise that a tradesman should be on the verge of bankruptcy, without his knowing the situation of his affairs, if

he never examined his books, or took his stock? It will not do in temporal affairs, much less in spiritual ones, *to take it for granted, we are going on well.*

4. What helps the ruinous ignorance is, that professors are apt, when they do cursorily examine their state, *to adopt wrong standards of character*, and to compare themselves with each other, instead of the word of God. "I am no worse than my neighbour," is the excuse not only of the worldling, for his total neglect of religion, but of the professor, for his low degrees of it. Instead of examining the Bible to see what he ought to be, and comparing himself with that, he just looks round upon his fellow-Christians, to see what THEY are, and is quite satisfied if he finds himself not below others. Alas, alas! the average attainments of the church of Christ are not such, as that its members having reached these, need not trouble themselves about any thing further.

5. *Mistaken symptoms of prosperity* often lead to ignorance of our real condition. The hectic flush upon the countenance, and the sparkle of the eye, may be supposed by some ignorant persons to be the marks of blooming health, where, in fact, they are the tokens of incipient consumption. The increased appetite may be regarded as the symptom of returning strength, when, in reality, it may be only the harbinger of dissolution; so in religion also, there are delusive signs of spiritual health and vigour. Increased ability and disposition to talk of religion in the way of explaining and defending its doctrines, may be mistaken for an increased interest and influence of it in the heart, whereas it may be nothing but the working of pride, or an effusion of vanity. Zeal for some peculiar notions or forms, may be sup-

posed to be pure concern for God's glory, though all the while it may be the most rancorous party spirit. Liberality in giving, may be self-righteousness or ostentation; undeviating formality may be miscounted ardent devotion; enthusiastic attachment to some novel opinion, may be erroneously supposed to be spirituality of mind. These are but a few specimens of the errors into which men fall, in judging of religious prosperity; and they tend to show the vast importance of our having a scriptural knowledge of the correct tests of personal godliness.

In all these ways may professors be kept in ignorance of the state of their souls, and be in a declining condition, without being sufficiently aware of their alarming situation.

I now go on to consider the case of the BACKSLIDER IN CONDUCT. I mean the professor, who has yielded to the power of temptation, and fallen into actual sin. The Scriptures furnish us with melancholy instances of this in the history of NOAH, LOT, DAVID, JONAH, and PETER; while our knowledge of the church of Christ, in our own days, adds to the number. Some have fallen into intemperance, others into impurity; others into fraud; and others into all the varieties of human misconduct. In some cases there have been gross departures from the rule of Christian morals, without its being suspected, and the backslider has pursued his guilty course, without its being known to any one but God and his conscience. Generally, however, the awful fact, sooner or later becomes notorious, and is matter of public scandal. Persons of all ages; of both sexes; of the various grades of society; and of the different sections of the church, have been guilty of the sin of backsliding. That such things should occur, how-

ever it may be lamented, cannot be matter of surprise, when we consider the prevalence of temptation, the constitution of human nature, and the imperfection, and occasional unwatchfulness of the best of men. To such as are in this melancholy and awful condition, I now make my appeal.

Is it necessary to represent to you the sinfulness of your conduct? But who shall describe its enormity? What pencil can delineate in shades dark enough, the aggravated nature of your crime?—Against what light, what mercy, what professions, what vows, what privileges, have you sinned? Your transgressions include the blackest treason, united with the vilest ingratitude. But I will suppose that you are already sensible of this. Permit me, then, to ask you, are you happy? Impossible, unless your heart is hardened, and your conscience is seared as with a hot iron. No, the streams of religious comfort are dried up; the fountain of life is at a distance, and nothing but a cup of wormwood is its substitute. Faith is suppressed, love quenched, hope clouded, joy fled, prayer restrained, and every spiritual delight vanished. Guilt, shame, darkness, and defilement, have taken possession of the soul. In what agony of spirit have you sometimes repeated those verses:

Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord;
Where is the soul refreshing view,
Of Jesus and his word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still;
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.

It is, or it ought to be, no small ad
misery of a backsliding state, that it *stop*
fulness. In your holier and better da
good; but what good can you do now?
the declining professor, who still keeps u
in the church, and among his fellows, ha
to be what he was. His prayers in publ
their unction, his conversation in private
the sick are not visited; the poor not re
young not counselled; the sinner not
they once were. His energies are pa
influence gone. He has begun to withh
perty, his time, his labour, from the cau
His family, his friends, all see, feel, and
alteration. O, how changed from that
member of the church of Christ, which h
And if this be the case with *him*, how m
you, whose misconduct has in effect se
from all those scenes of usefulness, whic
measure still frequents. *You* not only
but much harm. You are not privileged
neutral. You diffuse around you the
death. If a parent, you prejudice the m

But consider the imminent danger you are in of falling into future temptations, of sinking deeper into the mire of sin, and departing farther and farther from God. You cannot stop where you are, but must come back in the character of a penitent, or go on to that of an apostate. You are in danger of eternal damnation. "The object at which sin aims, whether in believers or unbelievers, is DEATH, eternal death, and to this it has a natural and direct tendency. And if it does not come in all cases to this issue, it is not because of its being different as to its nature or tendency in some persons, to what it is in others, but because a timely stop is put to its operations. Only let it go on without repentance till it has *finished* its work, and eternal death will be the issue. Whatever we are, so long as sin lies unlamented upon the conscience, we can have no scriptural foundation to conclude that we are Christians. No real Christian, it is true, will prove an apostate; yet, while we are under the influence of sin, we are moving in the direction which leads to apostacy. If we are contented with a relapsed state of mind, what ground have we to conclude that it is not our element, or that we have ever been the subjects of true religion?" *

I now suggest one or two cautions, and some directions, which are applicable to your case.

Do not attempt while the sinful practice is continued, to gain any comfort of mind by the supposition that you are a true Christian still, and shall one day be restored to God by penitence and faith. Do not attempt to establish in reference to your own case, the distinction between the backsliding of a child of God, and that of a hyprocrite.

* Andrew Fuller's Works, vol. iv. p. 460.

There is a difference, I know, both as to causes and results, but *you* cannot discern it in yourself, nor can others discern it in you, as long as you are living in sin. There is no view of God's word, nor any recollection of your own experience, that should have the smallest influence to comfort you in sin. There is more in that one sin which you refuse to repent of and forsake, to make it probable so far as we can judge, that you will draw back to perdition, than there is in all your supposed conversion, and in all the doctrines of grace to make it probable that you will be brought to heaven. To take any comfort in the idea of future repentance, while sin is for the present committed and enjoyed, is the most unscriptural, irrational, and shocking of all delusions.

Do not allow yourselves to believe that you have repented, except upon good grounds. Imagine not that you are penitent, because you grieve over the sin and condemn it, if you have not forsaken it. You may shed floods of tears, and give up the act to the severest condemnation, without a word of justification or palliation—but if it is not relinquished, you are a backslider still, and such you must remain till you have given up the evil thing. If, on the other hand, you *have given up* the sin, but still continue to justify or palliate it, you are far off from penitence. Nor is it enough to have a partial and transient amendment, produced rather by some temporary cause, such as a sermon, or an alarming event, rather than by a renewed exercise of penitence and faith. Equally inadequate is that amendment which is the result not of deep humiliation before God, but of mere selfish and prudential considerations. And be assured, that you have not yet been brought to the necessary compunction and re-

formation, if you love to talk or think of the sin you have committed. Repentance blushes even to think, much more to speak of our transgressions. It is a silent retiring grace. And it is moreover characterized by the most exquisite sensibility in dreading and avoiding every thing that, in the remotest degree, tends to, or tempts to the repetition of the sin, so that if we put ourselves in the way of sinning again, we are still in a backsliding state.

Backsliders, be not deceived then. And do not, oh! do not remain as you are. In seeking restoration, take care to use the right means. Mistake not the way back to God. Add not another error to those into which you have already fallen. The following directions may be of service to you.

There must be a sincere desire to return. In whatever way we may have departed from God, there must be a sincere desire to come back to him again. Without this, all directions will be in vain, and all means without effect. And do you *not* desire it? Is backsliding pleasant? Are you as happy as when living near to God, and enjoying the testimony of your conscience? To quicken your desires and make you long more earnestly for restoration to the enjoyment of the divine favour, it may be well to listen to the admonition given by our Lord to the church of Ephesus. "*Remember from whence thou art fallen.*" This was not said in the way of taunt; *then* it had been severely just, but in the way of friendly counsel. Think, backsliding Christian, what thou once wast, and ask, "Is it better with me now, than it was then?"

Think of thy holiness and happiness in those days of thy first and fervent love; think how sweet, yea sweeter than the honey-comb, were those precious truths, for which you have lately had no relish;

how delightful were those means of grace in which you now take no pleasure: how joyfully you resorted to the house of God, welcomed the Sabbath, and joined in the communion of saints at the table of the Lord: with what confidence you drew near to God, while your conscience testified in your favour, and took away every dread of the Most High: you had the joy of faith, the comfort of love, the patience of hope, and a humble consciousness of purity—but this is all gone—and O, how changed! how fallen! Look up to those delectable mountains, from the sunny tops, and verdant slopes, and beautiful prospects of which you have descended into the gloomy and sterile wilderness in which your spirit now roams like the dispossessed demoniac in the Gospel, seeking rest and finding none. Return, return to God. Let a sense of duty draw you, and a sense of misery drive you back to him from whom you have departed.

2. *You must at once abandon, and with abhorrence too, the sin by which you have departed from God.* You must instantly, and without reluctance, forsake your evil ways. You must say with the poet:—

> The dearest idol I have known,
> Whate'er that idol be,
> Help me to tear it from thy throne,
> And worship only thee.

"Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." This is the direction for the sinner, and the same applies to the backslider. The hand of faith when it opens to lay hold

of Christ, drops the sin it had grasped before. You must part with your sin or Christ.

3. *It may be well to consider in what way you have fallen*, that your repentance may have a special reference to your transgressions, and that your recovery may be in the way and to the point of your departure. Was it by a sudden temptation plunging you into sin, or by the long accumulation of little sins, that you were prepared for the greater fall? Was it by pride and prosperity, or by rashness and imprudence? Was it by neglect of private prayer, or of the Scriptures? An examination of this point is of considerable importance in various ways.

4. *You must closely consider and rightly understand the evil nature of your backslidings, as sins committed after your conversion to God.* As our first return to God begins with conviction, so must every other return. Such sins as yours have been committed in violation of the most solemn vows and engagements; without any provocation on the part of God; and against the greatest and frequently repeated mercies; they are characterized by singular perils in reference to ourselves, and peculiar danger as regards the well-being of others. But all this is nothing, if your hearts are not duly *impressed* with these things. The clearer your perceptions are of the enormity of your conduct, the more earnestly you will covet the renewed expressions of divine forgiveness, and the returning sense of pardoning mercy

5. *Consider God's infinite willingness to receive and pardon the penitent and returning backslider.* When once the erring Christian is brought to a due and deep sense of his sins, how pungent his grief, how oppressive the weight of his guilt. He is in

danger of sinking into the depths of despondency, and viewing himself as an outcast from both God and his people. His sins in all their aggravations appear to his distracted mind. Satan accuses, conscience stings. Every look of every Christian seems to reproach him. And what is worse, God seems to frown, and has, to his perturbed imagination, appeared to cover his throne with a cloud from which thunders roll, and lightnings flash, and awful forms of justice come forth. No, thou art mistaken, trembling penitent, the cloud, and the thunder, and the lightnings, and the awful forms of justice exist *only* in thy imagination. God has scattered over the whole page of revelation, invitations, encouragements, and promises to draw thee back to himself. From the hour of thy departure, he has never ceased to look after thee, and even to follow thee, with the messages of wounded love, and inviting mercy. Hearken to a few of them. "O, Israel, return unto the Lord, thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn unto the Lord; say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously. I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him."—Hos. xiv. Can you need encouragement after this? Will not *this* cheer you, and be felt as a sufficient warrant to return to God, and hope for mercy. If not, listen to the following pathetic language:—"Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, 'Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God.' Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him;

I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."—Jer. xxxi. 18—20. What unbelief or despondence can stand out against this?

6. But perhaps you want still more particular directions. Your case is difficult, your situation one of danger and urgency. *Embrace every opportunity of retirement for reading the Scriptures*, especially those parts which are suited to your case. Turn to such portions of Holy Writ as JEREMIAH, ii., XXXI.—HOSEA, xiv.—MICAH, vii.—PSALMS, XXV, XXXii, XXXviii, li.—the parable of the prodigal son, and other portions, which set forth at once the spirit of penitence, and the mercy of God. *Be also much in prayer.* Solemn approaches to God are eminently calculated to impress the mind with a sense of sin, to inspire us with abhorrence on account of it, and at the same time to encourage our faith in God's pardoning mercy, and our dependance on his restoring grace. *There must be minute and unreserved confession of sin*, an utter renunciation of all self-defence, excuses, and palliations; a disposition to lay the hand upon the mouth, and united with this a spirit of self-condemnation. We must admit all the aggravations of our sin, and look upon it, just as we may suppose God does. *You shall praise God that he has borne so long with your misconduct*, and be especially grateful that he did not cut you off in your sins, nor allow you to go on still sinning, and acting out your transgressions to the full extent of their nature and tendency. *Set apart special seasons of devotion to humble yourselves before God, by fasting and prayer.* Extraordinary cases require the use of extraordinary means. "A day," says Mr. FULLER, "devoted to God in humiliation, fasting and prayer, occasionally occupied with reading suitable parts of the Scriptures,

may by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, contribute more to the subduing of sin, and the recovery of a right mind, than years spent in a sort of half-hearted exercises." Be neither surprised, mortified, nor offended, *if, for a while, your fellow-Christians who are acquainted with your lapses, should look shy upon you*, and seem incredulous as to the sincerity of your repentance. "Wherefore should a man complain, a living man for the punishment of his sins. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." Let the spirit of these passages be in you, and consider whatever you may be called to endure as light compared with what you have deserved. *In all your approaches to the Saviour, let it be under the character in which you first applied to him for mercy, that of a* SINNER. "If you attempt to approach the throne of grace as a good man, who has backslidden from God, you may find it impossible to support that character. The reality of your conversion may be doubtful, not only in your apprehension, but in itself. Your approach, therefore, must not be as one that is *washed, and needeth not, save to wash his feet;* but as one who is defiled throughout, *whose hands and head*, and every part needs to be cleansed. Do not employ yourself in raking over the rubbish of your past life in search of evidence that you are a Christian. You will not be able in your present state of mind, to decide that question; nor would it be of any service to you if you could decide it. One thing is certain; you are a *sinner*, a poor, miserable, and perishing sinner; the door of mercy is open, and you are welcome to enter in. Let your past character be what it may, and let your conversion be ever so doubtful, if you can, *from this time*, relinquish all for Christ, eternal life is before you."—FULLER. In

your approaches to God as a sinner, *feel as much your need of Christ as you ever did:* you can go in no other character than a sinner, and by no other way than Christ. God meets his returning children, just where he meets his repenting enemies, at the cross; and nothing is so eminently adapted to open all the springs of godly sorrow, as a believing contemplation of the death of Christ. There must be a simple dependance upon the Spirit of God for our restoration. We can of our own accord depart from God, but it requires the omnipotence of his grace to bring us back. *You must be satisfied with nothing short of a complete recovery;* which includes two things, a sweet and comfortable sense of pardon; such a faith in God's promise of mercy, such a full reliance on the blood of Christ, as takes away all tormenting sense of sin and dread of God, and restores the soul to peace; and together with this recovery, includes such a victory over your corruptions, as that they shall lie wounded to death before you. And with all this must be united *a holy and trembling jealousy over yourself,* a spirit of deep humility, and abasing consciousness of weakness, a feeling of dependance, and a purpose of watchfulness for the future.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE NECESSITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INFLUENCE TO SUSTAIN THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

THE duties of the Christian profession are so numerous, so arduous, and so much beyond resources which we have in ourselves, that this volume would be incomplete in a very important and essential point, if it contained no distinct and explicit reference to the assistance necessary to their right performance. I devote this chapter, therefore, to a consideration of the work of the Holy Spirit, as the source of the believer's strength. There is a passage of Scripture on this subject, so fraught with instruction, that it may be well made the basis of what I have now to advance, "*If we* LIVE *in the Spirit, let us also* WALK *in the Spirit.*"—Gal. v. 22. The premises in this text, contain a striking and beautiful description of the nature of true piety; "it is living in the Spirit:" and its conclusion, an equally beautiful description of its visible development and gradual progress, which is said to be *walking* in the Spirit. These are inseparable from each other: there can be no spiritual walking without life, and where there is life, there *will* be walking.

The unconverted sinner is in a state of moral death; "*he is dead in trespasses and sins.*" He

has animal, intellectual, and social existence, but as to divine and heavenly things, he is as dead to these matters as a corpse is to surrounding material objects; he has no spiritual perception, no holy sensibilities, no pious sympathies, no religious activity; he is destitute of all moral vitality. Regeneration is the transition of the sinner from this state into one which is its very opposite; it is the impartation and commencement of a new spiritual existence. It adds no new natural faculties, but only gives a right bias and direction to those which, as rational creatures, we already possess.

There are two descriptions which the Scripture has given us of this new and holy state or condition, into which divine grace brings us. The first is in our Lord's words, "*That which is born of the Spirit is* SPIRIT."—John, iii. 6. Is Spirit. This does not mean man's intelligent nature, i. e. his understanding, or reasoning faculty; nor his soul, i. e. his animal nature—these he has already—but it signifies a new moral nature, a spirit which enters into a man's spirit; a spirit put into himself. It is not a thing which lies upon the surface of a man, which consists in mere forms, ceremonies, or talk; but which enters into him, and seats and centres itself in his mind, and takes possession of his inmost self, as the soul of his very soul. *Religion is* SPIRIT: a something produced by the DIVINE INFINITE SPIRIT, and of the nature and likeness of its Parent, by whom it is begotten. It is a thing, as to its essence and true existence, invisible as the soul in which it dwells, but like that, animating a body with which it is united. When the prophet would speak diminishingly and with contempt of the Egyptian power, he says, "Their horses are flesh, and not spirit." Religion, on the contrary, is not flesh, but spirit, as if there

were scarcely any thing else that so well deserved the term, and all besides this new, holy, heavenly, divine nature, were too nearly allied to matter to be called *spirit*. The other term by which religion is described is allied to this: it is LIFE. How mysterious, how precious a thing is life! Nothing, in a general way, is better understood, yet nothing, upon the attempt to analyze it, more speedily, or completely evades the power of scrutiny. What philosopher shall strip this little monosyllable LIFE, of all the mystery that hangs around it, and lay bare to our perception the principle of *life?* Religion is *life;* not animal, intellectual, or social, but *spiritual*. In looking into nature, we find a graduated scale of animated beings; the most insignificant vegetable is above the greatest mass of inanimate matter; the weed of the wilderness, for instance, is superior to the rock of Gibraltar, because the former has the principle of life. The least insect that crawls, is above the noblest vegetable production, the cedar of Lebanon, or the oak of the forest, because it has a higher kind of life, a principle of volition and locomotion. The child of a year or two old is, in dignity, above the noblest objects of inanimate nature, above the sun in all his glory; above the ocean or the forest; above the lion, notwithstanding his strength; the elephant, with his sagacity; or the leviathan, with his bulk; for that child has a rational *mind*, and is the subject, not only of intelligence, but of conscious and moral emotion. But a *Christian* has a principle of vitality in him, which is far above every other kind of life; *the indwelling of the Spirit of God in his soul* produces that which is the perfection of life itself; the climax of vitality; the top and flower of animated nature: so that the regenerated peasant is, in the eye of God, a being far more like himself, far more nearly allied

to the Infinite, the Parent Spirit, than the greatest unconverted philosopher in the world. This divine life consists of that illumination of the judgment, by which not only the theoretic meaning, but the moral glory of spiritual things is perceived; together with that love to them in the heart, which is drawn forth in all the exercises of a course of righteousness. God is light. God is love. Or, uniting both together, GOD IS HOLY LOVE. So is the renewed mind; and this is religion, this is life.

But, it is said, we live in the *Spirit*. Not simply *by*, but with a still greater intensity and emphasis of meaning, *in* the Spirit; importing that the Holy Ghost is not only the efficient cause and author of our spiritual life, but that he is the sustainer of it; "as if," says Mr. HOWE, "the soul had its very *situs*, or situation, in a region of life, which the spirit creates for it by his vital, abiding presence." Just as the soul is present with the body, diffusing its vivifying influence throughout all its parts, warming all, sustaining all, moving all, directing all, "till the body may, in one sense, be truly said to be in the soul, rather than the soul in the body; so is the Holy Ghost in the *New Creature*, which he has formed in the believer, imparting life to it, clothing it as it were with life, filling it with life, and is all in all of life to it."

The Christian partakes of this life in the Spirit, by virtue of his union to Christ by faith. There can be no communication of life apart from Christ. *He* is the head, and his people are the body: *He* the tree, and they are the branches—all the fulness of the Spirit is in him, and comes from him to his people. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, and he that hath the Son, hath life." As no branch that is not united to the tree, and as no limb

that is not united to the head, can have life, or retain it; so neither can there be any spiritual life in the soul without union to Christ. Hence his admonition to his disciples, "abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without (or apart from) me, ye can do nothing."—John, xv. 4, 5. Hence also that striking language of the Apostle, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Hidden as to its spring, which is in God: a stream fed by a spring, which rises up in the depths of the divine nature.

It is exceedingly important that professors should well understand, and often and seriously meditate on this subject, that they may know from what source to draw their supplies for the Christian warfare, and be led to something more, for keeping up the power of godliness in the soul, than maintaining a round of bodily exercises. There must be a continued exercise of faith in our Lord Jesus, as the source of all spiritual life, a pressing, as it were, still closer and closer to him, to receive out of his fulness, and grace for grace; and, at the same time, a feeling of dependance upon the power of the Holy Ghost, for all that is necessary to a life of pure, undefiled, and consistent religion.

The Apostle calls upon those who *live* in the spirit, to *walk* in the spirit. There is great force and beauty in this expression. It is as if he had said, "Since you profess to be alive, arise, walk, act. Prove that you have received a new life, by a new and corresponding course of action. Act out your spiritual nature, in spiritual conduct; and let a holy mind be seen forming and animating a holy character. And

remember, also, that you must even depend for the manifestation of life, on the same power that gave it. Walk *in the spirit.*" This is a just, forcible, and natural argument. All living things act according to their nature. Trees act out their nature in bearing fruit according to the law of vegetable life, which is in them. Animals, whether wild or domestic, carnivorous or granivorous, act out their nature, by propagating, and obtaining sustenance, according to the modification of *animal* life, which is in them. Rational creatures act out their nature by thinking and willing according to the principle of *intellectual* life, which is in them. In all these cases, there is no dormancy in the principle of vitality; it is not inert, but active; and its activity is appropriate to its nature, and regulated by its own fixed law. So must it be with the Christian; he is a species in the world of living beings, peculiar to himself. He has a life, which, viewed in all its circumstances, is unique in its nature and in the sphere in which it is to act, and *he*, therefore, is to act out this nature; and as he *lives* in the spirit, he is also to *walk* in the spirit.

I need scarcely say, that by *walking*, we are to understand acting. Mr. Howe, in his admirable sermons on this passage, and to which I refer the attention of all who would see an important theological subject, profoundly and beautifully treated, has an admirable illustration of this figure, which is ingenious, without being far-fetched, or overstrained. Walking is *self motion*, proceeding from an internal principle in the thing that moves; so is religion, not like the mechanical actions of an automaton, or the carrying forward of a corpse—it is a *voluntary motion*, not the being dragged along by force, but a man's freely going forward; so is religion a matter of voluntary choice—it is *orderly motion*, acting ac-

cording to a prescribed course; not a freakish, wild, eccentric action; so is religion a procedure according to a rule, a going on in a way laid down and set before us—it is, to a man in health, a *pleasurable motion;* so is religion a way of pleasantness, the healthful exercise of moral energies—it is a *continued motion;* so is religion, not a sudden and temporary resolve, but a remaining habit—it is a *progressive* motion; not a moving backward and forward in the same place, but going onward from place to place; so is religion a progress in knowledge, in faith, in holiness.

I shall now state what those acts and habits are, which constitute the course of conduct thus denominated.

1. *It is acting according to the Spirit's rule,* which is the word of God. The Scriptures are given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and are his instrument in the great work of regeneration and sanctification. All the Spirit's communications are of things promised in the word, and with direct reference to the things revealed in the word. All religious sentiments, all practical precepts, all emotions, are to be tried by the word. This is the standard, the test, the judge. It is the rule by which the Spirit works, and it is the rule by which the subjects of the Spirit's influence are to act. Dreams, visions, impulses, and unintelligible inward emotions, are not to be regarded, but only the word fairly interpreted. We know nothing of the mind of the Spirit, but as he has revealed it in the Scriptures; and there he *has* revealed it, and we are "to walk by the same rule, to mind the same thing." We are not to judge of our own state by any supposed *direct* witness of this Divine Agent, but by comparing his work in us, with the description of that work in the word. The apostle has given

us a beautiful metaphorical representation of this, where he says, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you;" or as it should be rendered, *into which ye were delivered as into a mould*."—Rom. vi. 17. The metaphor is taken from the art of casting metals; the believer's heart, softened and melted by the fire of the Spirit's influence, is cast into the mould of Scripture, so as to come forth answering to its type, line to line, and feature to feature. The character which the Spirit forms, is according to that which he has delineated in the word. A Christian is the production of a living, holy being, by the Holy Ghost, according to the rule which he has laid down in the Bible.

2. Walking in the Spirit signifies, our keeping up a practical regard to those objects, of which the spiritual excellence was revealed to the mind, and for which an appetite and relish were imparted in regeneration. New light then broke in upon the mind, things altogether unknown were discovered to the soul, and others, only theoretically known, were seen in a new and heart-affecting manner. This seems to be the very nature of that discovery which the Holy Ghost makes to the mind which he condescends in infinite mercy to renew and sanctify—I mean a perception of their moral excellence or holiness, accompanied by a taste or relish for them on that account. Holiness comprehends all the true moral excellence of all intelligent beings. It is the excellence, beauty and glory of the divine character and the sum of all virtue, in men or angels. It is holiness that constitutes the beauty of the law and of the gospel, of all divine ordinances, and religious institutes. Holiness was the glory of man at his creation, which he lost by the fall, which is restored by regeneration, and is consummated in eternal

glory. The great design of the Spirit's work in regeneration, is to produce in man's soul, a moral affinity for holiness, a love to holiness, a delight in holiness, and which shall be continually called into activity by the presence of holy objects. Religion, or the divine life in the soul, we have already said is holy love, and consequently walking in the Spirit is the acting of this holy love upon holy objects. As all life seems to have natural and instinctive antipathies to, and aversions from what is injurious to it, so the divine life in the human soul, has an antipathy and aversion to sin, which is its poison, its antagonist principle, and its deadly enemy; so that a good man walking, according to this holy vitality, is ever watching, praying, striving against sin. His new nature recoils from it, and he keeps up studiously this holy shuddering of heart. In all life there are certain movements towards its appropriate objects of sustenance and gratification; vegetables strike their roots into the soil, and open their air and sap vessels to receive the influence of the atmosphere and the earth; animals are ever carrying into act their appropriate instincts to obtain support, and enjoy all the good of which their nature is capable; the soaring and singing of the lark, the labour of the bee, the spinning of the spider, the chasing of his prey by the lion, are all the actions of the life that is in them. The artist working at his bust or his picture; the poet throwing off the fine imaginings of his genius; the scholar analyzing language; and the philosopher examining the laws of creation, are all the workings of intelligent existence. And what are the actings of *spiritual* life? The pushing onward of the soul, through the visible to the invisible world; its ascension from earth to heaven; its passing the boundaries of time and sense, to roam amidst

things unseen and eternal; the faith of an unseen Saviour: the love of an unseen God; and the hope of an unseen heaven. This is walking in the Spirit, walking with God, and *visibly* walking with him. Enjoying him as the chief good, seeking him as the supreme end, and obeying him as the Sovereign Ruler. I know nothing in which the spiritual life is more distinguished in its actings, from the merely rational one, than in its tending towards God in Christ, as by a law of spiritual gravitation, to its centre.—The apostle in one short sentence, has described the whole acting of this new nature; "FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST." The Spirit's work in the New Testament, and in the Old too, is to testify of Christ, and to glorify HIM; and his work in the believer's heart, has the same object, to lead him to live before the world, for the honour of the Saviour; and for this purpose, to enable him to derive all his supplies from the fulness that is in him, that Christ may be seen to be all in all to him. This is spiritual walking, the soul's escaping from the region, and rising above the influence, of carnal objects, and dwelling in a sphere of spiritual things; finding these to be its vital atmosphere, its native element, its beloved home.

3. To walk in the Spirit implies *the cultivation and exercise of those holy virtues towards our fellow-creatures, the seminal principles of which were sown in our heart at the time of our conversion.*—There is, I believe, a prevalent mistake on this subject among some good people, who appear to suppose that the only design contemplated and accomplished in regeneration is to give a right disposition of the human heart towards *God*. That this is its principal object is admitted, but it is not its only one, for it is also designed to give a proper bias towards our

fellow-creatures, which we have not till
changed by divine grace. When man sin
fell, not only from God, but from his fellow-cr
also. Love, which had been created with h
in him, departed from his soul and left him ur
dominion of uncontrolled selfishness. The g
change which restores him to God, restores
his fellows. In that great renovation, selfis
dethroned, and love again raised to be the re
the soul. Love, first and supremely exercis
towards God as infinitely the greatest and
of beings; but it does not, cannot stop ther
is a principle, which from its very nature n
pand to embrace the universe. It is wo
remark, though perhaps, it has not been no
it ought to have been, that in most places wh
subject of regeneration occurs in Scriptur
spoken of in connection with the exercises of
disposition towards our fellow-creatures;
of this I refer to the following passages—J
18—20. 1 Peter, i. 22, 23; xi. 2, 3; 1 J
8—11. But I need not go for evidence farth
the context of the passage I am now consid
The apostle in varying his metaphor from the
of a man, to the produce of a tree, says, "T
of the spirit are love, joy, peace, long-sufferi
tleness, goodness, faith, (i. e. fidelity,) meekne
perance." These virtues almost exclusively
our fellow-creatures; yet they are the fruit
Spirit. It is evident that they are most c
only so many varied operations and exercis
charity which the apostle so beautifully desc
his epistle to the Corinthians. The cultiv
these virtues in dependance upon divine gr
with a view to the divine glory, is walking
Spirit; and "there is one point of view," s

DWIGHT, "in which the performance of these duties more effectually evinces the Christian character and proves the reality of our religion, than most of those which are classed under the head of piety; it is this:—*They ordinarily demand a greater exercise of self-denial.*" Yes, it is far easier to hear a sermon, celebrate the Lord's Supper, read a chapter, and pray, than it is to repress the feeling of envy, extinguish the spark of resentment kindled by a supposed injury, and cast out the spirit of malice. The man who cherishes in his bosom the spirit of charity to his fellow-creatures, from a deep sense of God's love to him in Christ, and who is enabled to make some tolerable proficiency in learning of Jesus, who is "meek and lowly in heart," has more of the living power of the Holy Ghost in his soul, than he who is dissolved in tears, or rapt in ecstacy under the burning, melting words and tones of some eloquent preacher. Never can it be repeated too often, or expressed too emphatically, that *to walk in the Spirit* IS TO WALK IN LOVE. When the apostle admonishes us not to grieve this Divine Person, he suggests, by what immediately follows this extraordinary injunction, that it is by the opposite of love that he is displeased; for, after commanding us to put away angry feelings, and to restrain all passionate language, he adds, "Be ye imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us."—Ephes. v. 5. We can never, as it were, be more entirely going the same way as the Spirit, never press closer to his side, never be in sweeter fellowship and accordance with his mind, than when cultivating the spirit of love. "From his descending on Christ in the form of a dove, as well as from many express declarations of Scripture we may with certainty conclude the indulgence of all the irascible

and malignant passions to be peculiarly repugnant to his nature. Vindictive passions surround the soul with a sort of turbulent atmosphere, than which nothing can be conceived more opposite to the calm and holy light in which the blessed Spirit loves to dwell." It is a well known phenomenon in natural history that the dew never falls in a stormy night, so neither does the dew of divine influence descend on that heart which is given up to the raging of tempestuous tempers. It must become calm and still if it would have this blessed privilege.

4. Walking imports *a progress in spirituality; a going on in this divine life, a gradual drawing nearer and nearer to the end of our calling of God in Christ Jesus.* All things that have a principle of life, have also a principle of growth, unless they are in a state of disease, or have passed their perfection, and according to a law of their nature begin to decay. If the sapling do not grow it is unhealthy; if the young lion do not grow it is in disease; if the child do not grow it is sickly; for life tends to growth. This is equally true in reference to the Christian, if there be life there should be increase, and if there be not, how can it be said there is walking. All the figures by which the divine life is set forth in the word of God are things of life, and growth: it is the babe growing to manhood; the tender seedling growing to a tree; the grain of wheat growing to the full corn in the ear; it is the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. What is set forth in figure, is also enjoined in plain precept, and we are commanded to grow in grace. Now the end to which we are walking forward, is a perfect conformity to the image of God; a perfect love to our fellow creatures; a perfect freedom from the lusts of the flesh; a perfect separation from all

sin; a perfect emancipation from the love of the world, and every thing that is contrary to the love of God; perfect knowledge, humility, and holy felicity. In these things, therefore, we ought *now* to increase. If we are not continually advancing towards this perfection; if we do not find a gradual influence of divine light and life and power; more discernable impressions of the divine image; a greater suitableness, so to speak, for God; a closer acquaintance with him, a higher delight in him, and a more entire devotedness to him, how can we imagine we are *walking* in the Spirit. We may keep moving, but if it be in a circle, a round of empty duties, heartless ceremonies, and cold formalities, what proof have we that we have life, or if we have it, that it is not in a state of disease and sinking back again into death?

Having thus considered what is implied in this spiritual motion of the renewed soul, I go on to point out the relation it bears to its divine cause. It is walking *in the Spirit*. To do any thing in the Spirit is to do it by his light, and by his power. We need his light to show us *what* is to be done, and *how* it is to be done, as well as his power to enable us to do it. The New Testament makes frequent mention of that gracious illumination, which believers receive from the Divine fountain of light through the whole course of their Christian life. In the natural world, He who in the beginning, said, "Let there be light," and produced what he called for, repeats in effect the command each morning, and causes the sun to rise upon the earth. The same Almighty Power that formed the orb of day, and produced the splendour of the first morning, still continues to fill that orb with light, and to pour forth his radiance day by day. Let the creating power,

as it perpetuates itself in the providential work of preservation be suspended for a single moment, and the light of worlds would become extinct, and the veil of darkness, fall over the solar system. So also is it in the world of grace. The divine Spirit is the cause, not only of the first illumination of the sinner's mind, but of the continued illumination of the believer's soul. Hence, the prayers of the apostle for the Ephesian and Colossian Churches. Ephes. i. 17, 18; Col. i. 9. How beautiful is his language to the former: "Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of light."—Ephes. v. 8. "Light is here spoken of as the very composition of the New Creature, as if it were a being all of light; now are ye light in the Lord." They are made up of light, being born of the Spirit. The great and glorious God himself is called the God of light, they are called the children of light. That is their parentage. Light descended of light, begotten of light. "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." All converse with him "is walking in the light as he is in the light." It is true that light signifies holiness, it necessarily connotes it, but then this only doth import and signify, that that light which goes into the composition of a new creature, is efficacious, refining, transforming light, such as makes the soul some way throughout suitable unto the notions of truth, which are now placed in the speculative understanding. Such is the noble character of regenerated souls; they are children of light, sons of the morning, made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Yes, this is descriptive of their present condition, and not merely of their future state to which it is generally and exclusively, but erroneously applied. "Giving thanks to the Father," says the apostle

"who *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." The Christian church, if not the city and metropolis of the kingdom of light, is the suburbs of it; and believers, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, are already dwelling in the environs of the world of light. They are within reach of those beams of spiritual radiance, which are for ever flowing forth from the fountain of splendour.

But they need continued supplies from that fountain to sustain, increase, and invigorate the spiritual life within them. The influence of the world is continually opposing and counteracting the holy principles of their new nature, and the remains of corruption within, rendering the eye of faith weak, its perceptions dim, and the sensibility of the soul to spiritual objects, dull and obtuse. The whole work of grace in the soul is carried on by the instrumentality of truth, and through the means of a holy illumination of the mind to perceive and feel it.—Spiritual light is that to the principles of holiness in the soul, which natural light is to the seeds of vegetables in the natural world, which cannot germinate or grow without light, and whose growth is suspended during a dark, cold, and cloudy season, in which the rays of the sun are much diminished: so also the fruits of the Spirit cannot grow but in the light of the Spirit. We cannot therefore do without renewed communications of this divine influence, this quickening, vivifying illumination. If this be withheld, our graces will appear like the stunted plants, or the diminutive, colourless, tasteless fruits of a short, cold, and cloudy summer. It is only as spiritual truths are seen by us and kept before us, in the clear and holy light which is imparted by the Spirit's influence, and felt by us to be entering like

warm sunbeams into the very soul itself, that we can grow in grace. We need fresh communications every step of our course to keep before us the glory of God as our centre, rest, and end; the loveliness, beauty and preciousness of Christ; the evil of sin and the transcendent excellence of holiness; the sublimity and importance of heaven, and eternal life; and it is only by the Spirit that this can be done.

But we want *power* or *moral ability*, as well as light. We need to be disposed, moved and helped in this divine walking. When a child is born, he is not endowed with a stock of grace, sufficient for him in all the future stages of his growth Of that child it is said with truth, that in all his subsequent growth and activity, "In God he lives, and moves, and has his being." The living, moving, acting principle of his nature, is still derived from God; he lives in God, and does not perform a single action, but as helped by God. So is it with the new-born child of God, he is made to live by the Divine Parent; but no stock of grace is imparted in regeneration, sufficient for all the future continuance, growth and actings of religion. No, we must live and move in the Spirit of grace, as well as have our being in him. We must all along act by the power of God. In regeneration, a new nature is imparted, composed of many divine, holy, and heavenly principles; not only are we then disposed and enabled to perform a single *act* or succession of acts, but we are brought into a spiritual *state;* a holy *nature* is formed as diverse from our former one, or from any thing else, as the nature of one species of creatures, is from another; a nature is more than even a habit. Now this nature is not *all* that we need, but also the continual exciting and helping of it, by the power of

the Holy Ghost. Though there is this new nature in us, there is something else in us, even the remains of the old and corrupt nature; and as the latter is continually hindering and opposing the former, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, we need divine power to quicken and aid the Spirit, and enable it to gain the victory over the flesh. To walk in the Spirit, then, is to do all things through the whole course of our profession in a frame of humble, and unlimited dependence upon divine aid.

It is our unspeakable privilege, that this gracious assistance is ensured to us by the word of God. It is called "the Spirit of promise," because the subject of so many assurances from God. But even the very *command* is an implied promise. How encouraging as well as extraordinary are the injunctions "*Be filled with the Spirit.*" "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." "Walk in the Spirit;" as if all the infinite, inexhaustible, and omnipotent power of that Divine Agent, were at our command, and we might have as much of it as we wanted, wished, and chose to appropriate to ourselves.

A few directions in reference to this divine light and power, will occupy the remainder of this chapter.

1. *Divine agency is not intended to supersede, but to aid our own exertions.* This is the meaning of that remarkable passage of Scripture, "*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do.*"— The apostle does not say, "as God works in you, there is no need of your working;" but, on the contrary, "Do you work, because God works." We must be as diligent, as devoted, as intent, as if all depended upon ourselves; as dependant as if we

could do nothing. God *does* nothing without *us*, and we *can* do nothing without *him*. *We* must walk, but it must be in the Spirit. If then, we would have divine aid, we must not be found in the lying, sitting or even standing posture, but in the *walking* attitude. We must gird up our loins, take our staff, and set forward, but all in a frame of dependance upon the power of God. "Thou meetest him," says the Prophet, "that worketh righteousness." God's spirit comes upon the walking, working servant, not upon the sleeping one.

2. Would we have much of the Spirit, *we must have faith in the Spirit.* This is as necessary as is faith in Christ. There must be an acting of faith, appropriate to the distinct official works of the Holy Trinity in the economy of Redemption. We must believe in the Father's moving originating love, in the Son's executive grace, and the Spirit's applying power. We must believe in the *promises* of this divine power, consider it as solemnly engaged to believers by covenant, and as a thing to be expected according to the declaration of the word of God. It must not appear to us as a matter so vast and surprising as that we can hardly presume to calculate upon it; for this is an obstacle of unbelief that will prevent the divine communication from flowing in upon us. Instead of wondering at those large communications which have been granted to particular persons and communities, we should attribute it to the unbelief and indolence of the church that they are not more frequent, and more copious. Placed as we are under the dispensation of the Spirit, his gracious communications should no more surprise us, than the showers of rain do in a country where rain abounds; it is the drought rather, that should be a matter of astonishment in such a

situation. There is evidently a weakness of faith in the church of Christ, touching this divine communication.

3. *There must be a deep poverty of mind, an impressive sense of indigence and dependance, if we would walk in the Spirit and be sustained by his gracious aid.* We must feel, as if in our spiritual course, we could not stir a step, nor perform a single action without *him*. Our frame of mind should be the very opposite of that of the church of Laodicea, who thought they had need of nothing. We must think and feel, that we have need of every thing.—This divine Agent is not likely to bestow his aid, where it is neither valued nor sought. It is fitting that we should feel our poverty, before we are enriched, and cry out from the depths of our indigence, "Have mercy upon me, for I am poor and needy." O, where is this sense of need among professors of the present day? It is an article of their creed, but is it a deep inwrought feeling of their heart? Do they look and talk, as if they felt their destitution? They mention it in their prayers, and admit it in their conversation, but is not this all? Whom do we hear mourning of their low estate, their deep necessity of divine grace, and expressing their longing for more copious effusions of celestial influence? Who complains of the drought? Who says, "When will the spiritual rain come?" Who inquires why the Spirit does not come down upon his church, the garden of the Lord, and upon the wilderness and solitary place? "It is with a great many Christians as it is said to have been with Sampson. He wist not that the Lord was departed from him. God was gone: his great strength was gone, yet he knew it not, but thought to have found it with him as at other times. When we walk or

run day to day, in a course of ordinary duty, and it may be, get nothing by it, no life, no strength, no influence of the Spirit, how little sense all this while is there of its absence from us? How few that regret the matter! One would think that there should be strange throbbings and palpitations of heart amongst us to think how little there is of the Spirit of the living God breathing in his own ordinances, and through the most sacred, and weighty, and important truths that we hear, from time to time. Methinks our hearts should misgive us, and we should be often recounting with ourselves, 'What will this come to?' A religion not animated by the Spirit, in which there is no life, no influence, what will this come to?"

4. If we would have much of divine influence, *we must feel an intense desire after this precious boon, united at the same time with a deep sense of our utter unworthiness of it.* God is under no other obligation to grant it, than that which he has voluntarily submitted to, in binding himself by his own promise. We are not to suppose that it is this promise, or the gracious communication which it assures to us, that constitutes the ground of our responsibility, as if God could not justly require any thing from us, or punish us for not doing it, if he did not grant us his grace. All that is necessary to make us accountable, is a means of knowing what God's will is, natural facilities to apprehend it, and sufficient motives to do it. We have all this without the Holy Spirit, whose influence where it is given is as much an act of pure grace, and sovereign mercy, as the mission of Jesus Christ. We must, therefore, cast away from us all idea of deserving this bestowment, or claiming it on the ground of justice. We must feel it to be an act of amazing love that God

should not only give us his Son, but his Spirit also. That it is an act of most wonderful condescension never to be sufficiently admired that God should make a Temple for the Holy Ghost in our hearts; a display of infinitely greater condescension, than for the greatest monarch upon earth to take up his dwelling in a cottage of mud for the benefit of his subjects. We should say, therefore, as the centurion did, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof." The lower we lie, the deeper we sink in humility and a sense of unworthiness, the more we shall have of this blessed power. The grace of God, like the dew, falls everywhere, but falls in greatest abundance in the valley, and lies longest in the shade. But this sense of unworthiness must not check our desire; we cannot deserve it, but we must desire it; yes, and with vehement longings of the soul, and pantings of the heart. And can we need to be stirred up to desire so inestimable a benefit? What! are arguments necessary to prove to us the value of that without which our body is but the sepulchre of a dead soul, and our whole existence but walking in a vain show? Are motives necessary to induce us to seek after that, without which we are dead while we live? If we could do without it, we need not desire it; if we could not have it, it would be vain to cherish any longings after it: but when it is essential to our spiritual existence; when it is promised by God; when we are commanded to seek it; when the possession of it in a large measure may be solicited; when the possession of it would be followed by such happy results, how earnestly should we covet it, and vehemently pant for it. O! did we but properly consider what a glorious communication the Spirit of God is, and what a blessed thing it is to be *filled with* the Spirit;

what an honour and a felicity it is to have this Divine Guest taking full possession of our soul as his Temple, overshadowing us with his glory, and filling us with his presence as he did the Holy of Holies in Mount Zion, how eagerly should we long for it, and how intensely breathe forth the desires of our soul after it. In the visible heavens, we see God *above* us: in the earth, God *around* us: in the law God *against* us: in Christ, God *with* us—but in the indwelling of the Spirit, we have God *in* us. And if it be the presence of God that makes heaven, then by the indwelling of the Spirit we have something of heaven upon earth. It not only leads us to the porch of heaven and the confines of eternity; not only conducts us to the top of Pisgah, where we may take a survey of the promised land; but carries us to the Mount of Transfiguration, where beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed as by the Spirit of the Lord, from glory to glory, into the same image. O Christians! stir up your hearts to covet this heavenly communication. Let us set before our minds the sad case of those who are destitute of it, or have but small measures of it: how low, and earthly, and vain a life they are living; how little of God, or Christ, or heaven, or holiness there appears in them; and how much to be dreaded is such a course. Let us consider what blessed fruits, what holy tempers, what spiritual joys, what foretastes of heaven, what blossomings of glory, would result to us from large measures of this divine light and power. Let us, therefore, shake off our indolence, resist the world, put away every obstacle to the coming down upon us, and into us, of this holy influence. Let us open the door of our heart, and keep it wide open for the entrance of this heavenly visitant. Let us look for him, wait for him, and

long for him, as we should for the arrival of a friend that was to bring us a medicine which would save us from death, or property that was to prevent us from going to prison.

5. If we would have the Holy Spirit to assist us in the divine walk, *we must earnestly pray for it.* This is the gracious blessing, which our Lord has encouraged us to solicit by that touching appeal which he makes to our own parental feelings: "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him."—Wonderful passage! It teaches us that having given us his Son, his Holy Spirit is that next boon which his paternal heart is delighted to bestow; which, like the mother waiting to feed a hungry, crying, and imploring child, he is ready to grant. But oh, where, we ask again, where are those vehement longings after the Spirit, which are breathed forth in fervent, believing, and effectual prayers? Those pantings after God, those longings and thirstings after righteousness, which are represented as bringing after them their own gratification? To be rich in worldly gain, not rich in spiritual influence, is the object with the great multitude of professing Christians.

6. If we would have the Spirit, *there must be a resignation of ourselves to his guiding wisdom, and governing power; a giving up of ourselves into his hands, to be habitually led by him.* Just such a surrendry and a following of him, as we should determine upon in reference to a skilful guide, who had undertaken to conduct us over high mountains, and by the side of dangerous precipices. How we should mark his footsteps, watch the motion of his arm, as it pointed out the track, and in some instances entreat him to take us by the hand, and lead us forward. So

should we give ourselves up to be led and helped by the Spirit of God. There should be a flexible frame of mind, yielding to the gentlest touches; a docile spirit, learning by the most distant hints. "As the natural consequence," says Mr. HALL, in his invaluable Tract on the Work of the Spirit, "of being long under the guidance of another, is a quick perception of his meaning, so that we can meet his wishes before they are verbally expressed; something of this ready discernment, accompanied with instant compliance, may reasonably be expected from those who profess to be habitually led by the Spirit. You have sometimes felt a peculiar seriousness of mind, the delusive glare of worldly objects has faded away, or become dim before your eyes, and death and eternity appearing at the door, have filled the whole field of vision. Have you improved such seasons, for fixing those maxims and establishing those practical conclusions, which may produce an habitual sobriety of mind, when things appear under a different aspect. The Spirit is said to make intercession for the saints, with groanings that cannot be uttered. When you have felt those ineffable longings after God, have you indulged them to the uttermost? Have you stretched every sail, launched forth into the deep of the divine perfections and promises, and possessed yourselves as much as possible of the fulness of God? There are moments when the conscience of a good man is more tender, has a nicer and more discriminating touch than usual; the evil of sin in general, and of his own in particular, appears in a more pure and piercing light. Have you availed yourselves of such seasons as these for searching into the chambers of imagery, and while you detected greater and greater abominations, been at pains to bring them out and lay them before the Lord? Have such visitations effected some-

thing towards the mortification of sin; or have they been suffered to expire in mere ineffectual resolutions? There are moments in the experience of a good man, when he feels a more than ordinary softness of mind; the frost of selfishness dissolves, and his heart flows forth in love to God and his fellow-creatures. How careful should we be to cherish such a frame, and to embrace the opportunity of subduing resentment, and of healing those wounds that it is scarcely possible to avoid, in passing through this unquiet world."

Walk, then, brethren, in the Spirit. Let there be an habitual dependance on this divine Agent. The Christian profession is a great and an awful thing—to fail in it will be dreadful, yea, intolerable misery. To fail here is to fail for eternity, to miscarry in the greatest and most solemn transaction in which we can ever be engaged. And fail we must, if the Spirit of God do not help us. We may not become immoral, or infidels, or heretical, or profane; but we shall lie down and die in worldly-mindedness; we shall perish in apparent respectability and comfort; we shall sink to the bottomless pit, amidst ease, and wealth, and all that is pleasant in this world; we shall go down to the regions of eternal night from the very midst of the church, if we have not the Spirit of God. Be this, then, our supreme, our habitual, our ever-quickening, moving solicitude, to obtain the Spirit of God. There is no other way to live, but by the Spirit; no other way to walk, but by the Spirit; this is the principle of holy vitality in our profession, which will render it like a tree verdant in its leaf, and abundant in its fruit; but without which, it will be a fruitless vine, withered in its foliage, scathed in its branches and its trunk, and fit for nothing but to be cut down, and cast into the fire.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DYING PROFESSOR.

"IT is appointed unto all men once to die:" There is no exemption, even for believers, from this decree. They are delivered from the sting of death, but not from its stroke; still, in one sense, they conquer, like their divine Lord, in being conquered. "If ever Christianity," says Mr. HALL, "appears in its power, it is when it erects its trophies on the TOMB; when it takes up its votaries where the world leaves them, and fills the breast with immortal hopes in dying moments." Christ triumphed for his saints, by his own death, and he is continually renewing the victory in *them*, amidst all the sufferings and decay of their own dissolution. This is beautifully illustrated in the subject of the present chapter; in which we are to contemplate the Christian's termination of her profession on earth, and see her finishing her course with joy. I shall not exhibit to my readers an ideal scene, but lay before them one of those glorious and blissful realities, which are continually occurring in the dying chamber of believers, that border-land which connects the regions of earth and heaven, and where the darkest scenes of the one are frequently irradiated by the reflected glory of the other.

Mrs. P. had been a member of the church under my pastoral oversight about ten years, and was one of many, who never cost her pastor's heart a sigh, till he lost her. Lovely in person, gentle and affectionate in her disposition, she added a lustre to her consistency as a Christian, by all that usually interests us in the general character. Tried much, and often, in the furnace of affliction, her faith, more precious than gold

that perisheth, was found unto the praise and honour, and glory of Jesus Christ. At length her last sickness came on in the form of a lingering consumption. It found her the happy wife of an affectionate and devoted husband, and the fond mother of a son of the age of twelve years, and two daughters, one ten, and the other eight. Possessing such ties to life, she was called to submit, amidst trying circumstances, to the stroke of death. Her profession, always like a clear and steady light, now shone forth with a beauty, that made her departure resemble a glorious sunset, after a cloudless day. Amidst the alternations usually produced by the flattering illusions of her disorder, she was never elated by hope, nor depressed by fear, but smiled on her physician, whether he spoke of recovery or death. However languishing with weakness, or racked by pain, or harrassed by coughing, she was instantly roused and made happy by one word of death or Christ. Such was the charm of these themes, that I have frequently seen her countenance change in a moment, by their potency, from an expression of great suffering to a smile that looked like a ray of the excellent glory, falling on her previously dim and languid eye. Instead, however, of speaking of her, or attempting to describe her, I will let her speak for herself. As I was about to leave home for a few days, and supposing that her end was not remote, I requested her husband to take minutes of any remarks that might drop from her lips, in order that I might be in possession of her last testimony to the truths of the gospel, and the power of religion. The following diary, extending only through ten days, is but a specimen of what occurred almost uninterruptedly for many months.

"Tell Mr. JAMES," she said one day, "that the fear and sting of death are both taken away:—the fear, because Christ died for sinners:—the sting, because

he fulfilled and magnified the law." And in reply to a remark that death was hard work, "No," she said, "sweet death! that opens heaven and shuts out earth."

AUGUST 4.—This morning she awoke exceedingly happy, and said, "What a mercy it is to have a Father in heaven. I wake every morning more happy, with more love to God, and more deadness to the world. O, my happy midnight hours! The things I most dreaded, I find most mercy in. I cannot say much, but I wish, when I can say a few words only, to utter the praises of that God who is so good to me."

At another time she said, "My bliss is too great to be endured on earth, and it 's too pure for it. Oh! seek God earnestly with all the heart, and then he will comfort you on a death-bed, in the same way he now comforts me. Confess to him all your sins, make no reserve, and remember not to put off the confession of *little* sins, for they will only harden the heart, and delay will make the confession more difficult at last."

AUGUST 6.—"I have been unspeakably happy," she said," to-night. Oh! seek God with all your heart; seek him while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." On having her pillows adjusted and made easy, her uplifted hands and eyes spoke more than words could do, her feelings of gratitude and thankfulness; "How can I sufficiently honour and adore God, for all his mercies towards me. I feel my heart almost ready to burst, and my whole soul swallowed up in gratitude and love to him; surely, surely, heaven is begun below!"

SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 7.—She observed, "Satan has been tempting me in the night, by a sense of past sins, but I have been enabled to beat him off, by praying for faith, and looking steadily at the cross. This life is as St. Paul describes it, a constant fight; I have found it to be so, but the idea that it is so near a close is to me exquisite. *You* will

(addressing me) find it so yourself, but watch and pray, and you will ultimately triumph. Sin is mixed with every thing here, and remember, whatever comes between the soul and God, as a cloud to dim the lustre of his glory, is sin. I was much struck with this idea about eighteen years ago, in attending the theatre, at the particular request of a friend, for I found when I retired to bed, I could not pray, which convinced me of the sinfulness of the theatre, and I never went again."

This morning she joined the whole family in singing, "When I can read my title clear," &c. She did so in a peculiarly animated manner, but with so trembling and feeble a voice, that it was pleasure mixed with pain, and the circumstance will never be forgotten.

During the day, such was her patience and resignation, that in allusion to her sufferings, she said, "I think I could bear a little more, if God thought fit to lay it upon me;" and looking upon her poor skeleton fingers, added, "I like to see them;" and then with an apparent smile of triumph said, "You know you cannot keep me here much longer, I shall soon be gone."

AUGUST 8.—This last night has been to her a sleepless, restless one; she appears almost worn out, and to be much engaged in prayer, for waiting patience: she said, "what an unspeakable mercy it is, that I 've not a doubt or a fear! but pray for me, that I may so continue to the end, for many a good Christian is permitted to be much harrassed by the enemy at the last; I have been much distressed to-night by Satan. I found I could not pray, but the passage afterwards came to my mind, 'there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,' &c., and this comforted me."

TUESDAY.—A few days ago she sent a message

to Mr. —— that she would send him "Mr. JAMES' Anxious Inquirer;" with her dying request that he would not only read it attentively, but with prayer, and if he did, she was sure it would conduct him in a safer and surer way to happiness, than the one he was now going. To-day she sent the book, and how much was she rejoiced at hearing that he had become so impatient for it, as to send to town to buy one, and was then engaged in reading it; may her prayer that it may be blessed to his conversion, be answered.

WEDNESDAY.—To-day she is so exceedingly feeble, that I can scarcely hear her speak; but with difficulty I caught the following words: "What a mercy it is that the work is finished, and that when in health I sought God with all my heart, in his own appointed way; I cannot talk to-day, I feel so ill; but all is sweet peace within: I die, resting simply on the righteousness of Christ." In the evening she said, "My God, my Bible, and my Saviour, are increasing sources of happiness, to which I can turn at any moment, without disappointment, and I find them more solid as other things fade away."

THURSDAY.—In reply to the words "God bless you," I addressed her this morning, she said, "Ah, God does indeed bless me with the choicest of his blessings; he supplies all my necessary wants, and

'Whatever else I think I want, 't is right to be denied.'"

This afternoon she has fatigued and weakened herself by again talking for a long time to Mrs. —— as to her soul's concern. Mrs. —— at one time made a great profession of religion, and was apparently before my poor wife in the Christian race, but the world has laid fast hold upon her, and she has backslidden. My dear wife is much interested about her, and considers she is not a lost character, as she appears not only to be *aware* of, but to *feel* her sad state, and is an unhappy woman—and augurs much from what she has

said to her during the two interviews. Mr. —— received his present of the book, she said, with much pleasure, and was affected with the idea that there was *one* in the world who cared for his soul, and intimated his wish, if there was no impropriety, to see my wife, to which she assented. If he come, may God strengthen her for the interview, for she is determined, by the help of God, to be plain and faithful, and say much to him.

SATURDAY.—Very ill to-day and yesterday; she suffers much from great difficulty in breathing, and spasms in the chest. When a little relieved, she said—"Oh, what a mercy it is to feel patience and perfect resignation, I can say from my heart, Lord, *thy* time, *thy* will, *thy* way."

SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 14.—Her prayers for my spiritual good, accompanied with her sincere thanks for what she termed my great kindness and affection to her as a husband, were very affecting; "Love and serve God," she said, "with all your heart, soul, and strength, and let this be a fixed and settled principle in all the concerns of life." In the midst of her sufferings, and they were very severe, she said—"I love God more than ever." In the afternoon, she said—"I could not have thought that any one could have suffered so much, and yet live; and if God inflicts such sufferings upon his own children, what must the pains of hell be to the wicked? O sin! sin! Remember all sorrow and suffering are the fruits and effects of sin. I cannot think what the wicked do on a death-bed, when the horrors of the mind are added to the pains of the body."

SUNDAY NIGHT.—Her sufferings increased, and she was at a loss to reconcile the sufferings of God's people with her belief in his great kindness and regard towards them; and it was apparent that though she had so often said that she had no doubts, no fears,

no anxieties, yet that a dark cloud was coming over the mind. "This is indeed," she said, "the hour and power of darkness; it is horrible."

Mr. ——— called on Monday morning to talk and pray with her. His visit much consoled her, and in an hour or two after, her spirit seemed to emerge from the darkness which had for so many hours hung over her, and all was bright sunshine again. She then said—"All is sweet peace again—*solid* peace. I am as certain of heaven as if I were already there—not that I have merited heaven—no: I have no works, no worthiness.

'Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling.'"

TUESDAY.—The words of the Psalmist—"Thou hast brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock," &c., were peculiarly expressive of her state and feelings now.

Perhaps nothing need be added to this; I will, however, give the substance of only one or two conversations I had with her during the last few days of her mortal conflict. On one occasion she said—"I have lain awake night after night, examining the foundation of my hope, but I cannot find a single flaw. I depend entirely upon the sacrifice of Christ for acceptance with God, and not at all upon my own works. I have not a doubt or a fear. I have had my seasons of spiritual distress, but have been enabled by God's Spirit to be faithful."

Speaking of her children, who had been for some time removed from home, she said—"When first I saw them after their return, I felt a pang at the thought of leaving them; but I prayed for faith, and was enabled instantly to give up, both them and my husband."

At another time, she exclaimed—"O that all the world knew what I enjoy, they would not then neg-

lect religion. I now feel the advantage of a remark I met with some time since in an old author: '*It is well to lay up a good stock of prayers for a dying hour.*' By which she meant, as the author did, that through her whole profession, she had been much engaged in prayer to God for his comfortable presence and gracious support, in her dying hour. She then adverted to the answer of her prayers which she was receiving, and said—"This state of mind is not natural to me. I used to be much afraid of dying, and this led me to be much in prayer; and now see how God is granting my request."

About the time of this interview of my own, a friend called upon her, who, upon hearing her talk beyond her strength, gently admonished her to spare herself. "Oh, it matters not," she replied, "I believe I shall die to-night, and it does not signify; I wanted to pray for my minister when he was last here, but had not courage." And then, lifting up her eyes to heaven, poured forth a most fervent and appropriate prayer both for him and his wife.

At a subsequent visit, finding her, beyond expectation, alive, I said, "What, still in the flesh?" and knowing the danger of her becoming impatient to be gone, I asked her if she was willing to wait in her suffering state, any time that God might see fit to detain her on earth? "Quite," she replied, "*quite* willing to wait and suffer any time, for I am sure God will give me grace. I am a wonder to myself. I am a monument of mercy. O, the mercies of God! *What a mercy the work of salvation is all done! What a blessing to have the soul safe!* I have nothing to do but to go. I am quite ready. When my husband reads the Scriptures to me, I now see a glory greater than I ever saw before. I see them in a new light. No other book but the Bible will do

now. I cannot bear, sir, (turning to me, she said,) even *your* books now. *Nothing but the pure truth of God will do now.* Sometimes it seems as if God had direct communion with my soul."

Then speaking of the generality of professors of all denominations, she said—"O what a difference have I seen in those I have had to do with. They do not live near enough to God: they are too worldly. Tell those of our church, from me, to live closer to God, and to give themselves more up to his service. I love the church of which I am a member. I die in communion with every member of it; but charge them from me, to be less worldly, and to live nearer to God."

She then gave utterance to a lamentation over some acquaintances whom she feared had been living without spiritual religion, and charged me to speak seriously after her decease to one friend in particular, on this subject. After this, followed a strain of exulting hope of the heavenly world: "There I shall see the Apostle Paul, and all the blessed spirits of just men made perfect: and, *above all, the Lord Jesus Christ, and be overshadowed with his glory.*"

A lady of considerable respectability and intelligence, but holding Unitarian sentiments, who had been exceedingly kind to her, visited her more than once, and was so struck with the scene, that she not only wept abundantly, but took two of her daughters with her to witness it also, and see how peacefully a Christian could die. The mind of the dying saint felt some little fear, lest she should not have courage to bear her testimony on behalf of her divine Lord, or speak with propriety on those truths which then yielded her strong consolation. She prayed earnestly to God for help, and help was granted her, and it was delightful to observe with what modest thankfulness she acknowledged the grace she had obtained to be

faithful. Indeed it was one pleasing feature of her dying experience that she was anxious to do good to all around her; and scarcely any came to her dying bed, who did not carry from it some instructive admonition. Among others, her nurse was an object of most tender solicitude, and while anxious for her spiritual welfare, she did not forget her temporal comfort, as the following little incident will prove. Among the friends who visited her, was one, who is in the habit of distributing garments to the poor, from whom with great diffidence she solicited a flannel gown, that the poor woman, when she herself was in her grave, might be protected from the cold in her night watches in sick chambers that might not be so warm as that in which she had waited upon *her*. Such a considerateness of the comfort of others, when flesh and heart were failing her, is a beautiful exemplification of *the charity that is kind*.

Among other things she uttered during the last day or two of her life, she said—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to them also that love his appearing." The words "not to me only, but to them also that love his appearing," seemed to give her peculiar delight. "The nearer I get home, she continued, the clearer I see my Father's house, and the more certain I am I shall be welcome there." On a great increase of bodily pain, she faintly said—"Spirit brighter; suffering very mysterious." Her last words were in reference to her state of mind. "Peace, peace, O sweet peace!" She died with her finger pointing up to heaven.

Behold the dying professor, and receive her testimony to the grace and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who, having* put his righteousness upon her,

and his spirit within her, has called her to join the palm-bearing multitude, in making her confession before the angels of God. "Here is the patience of saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." "I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."—Rev. xiv. 12, 13.

Thus ends, though not in all cases with the same degree of holy triumph, the profession of the sincere, consistent, and exemplary Christian. How bright a scene! How beautiful and how powerful a testimony to the reality and excellence of religion! I need not ask, whether infidelity can produce, or ever did produce, any thing like it; or whether philosophy ever did so with her enchantments. SOCRATES, conversing so calmly with his friends on the subject of immortality, just before he drank the hemlock, is a feeble exhibition of moral grandeur, compared with this. O Christianity! this is *thy* triumph and trophy.—What a proof is this of an immaterial and undying mind. To see reason in all its power—religion in its sublimest flights:—Then! when the heart is fluttering in the conflict of mortality!—Then! for the soul to soar, with angel flight, till its expressions are so grand, its conceptions so unearthly, its joys so much above sense, and reason, and even faith, too, that it looks all covered with the cloud of glory, in which it has already, in a measure, entered—can this be the mere modification of flesh and blood? Oh, no! it is mind triumphing over the weakness of matter. It is the original matter from which the poet has taken his beautiful copy:

The holy triumphs of my soul,
Shall death itself outbrave;
Leave dull mortality behind,
And fly beyond the grave.

And what was it that this immaterial, imperishable mind was then intent upon? On what was the eye of the soul fixed, and to what boundless object were its aspirations rising? Earth had receded, and carried with it all its kingdoms and their glory; but there was another glory rising to fill its place, in beholding the blaze of which, even husband, children, mother, friends, minister, and church were all lost sight of. She saw, as with a new sense, granted to dying saints, but unknown to living ones, things almost as unutterable as those which Paul witnessed in the third heavens; and loosening from every terrestrial object, sprung forward to lay hold upon immortality.

I grant that it is not the privilege of *all* the children of God, to enjoy so large a share of heaven upon earth as did this dear saint, for it is an undoubted fact, that even some of the most eminent servants of God have been far less favoured in their dying hour than she was. I could mention names of the most distinguished divines of modern times, whose passage through the dark valley was not irradiated with these bright corruscations of the heavenly glory. This fact has not been unnoticed by others. Can we account for it? No doubt, in some cases, the nature of their complaint may have had an influence, as certain disorders predispose more powerfully to the depression of the animal spirits than others. Mr. FULLER, during his last illness, laboured under this to a considerable extent, and the celebrated Mr. SCOTT, the author of the Commentary, did the same; but it was, in each of these cases, the effect of disease. "I never recollect," said the former, "to have had such depression of animal spirits, accompanied with such calmness of mind." "I could be glad," he said, "to be favoured with some lively hopes, before I depart

hence." "My hope is such, however, that I am not afraid to plunge into eternity." I have no doubt, that both in living saints, and in dying ones too, disease has much to do in preventing what is usually denominated *comfort;* but surely though disease may, in some cases, *prevent* comfort, it cannot, in a sane mind, *produce* it. The experience recorded in this chapter, is unquestionably the in-working of the mighty power of God. That the humbler saints should be thus favoured, while useful preachers, and great theologians, who have served God in their own, and will continue to serve him by their works, in all future generations, should be denied those bright manifestations of God's presence in death, is an arrangement that must have some ends, and teach some lessons in the divine administration. Does it not show the sovereignty of God, in the bestowment of his favours? Does it not hide pride from man, by proving that it is not even distinction in the church that can insure the brightest light of God's countenance? Does it not tend to keep humble, living Christians, and ministers, and authors of eminence, by reminding them, that persons never heard of beyond a narrow circle, may have a more glorious close of their profession than even they?—Does it not prove that God holds himself no man's debtor, for what he has done? Does it not manifest how inadequate all we do for Christ is to comfort us in a dying hour, and that theological giants, as well as the least child in God's family, can derive no comfort *then*, but from a simple dependance on Jesus? Does it not illustrate the power of Christ, in raising such meek and humble saints, such seemingly weak believers, into the spiritual prowess of the greatest conquerors of death? Does it not distribute more widely the honour of doing something for God, and of bringing glory to Christ; so that while some shall do much by their living labours, others shall do it by

their dying experience? Does it not encourage the less public professors, who are the greatest in number, to look forward with lively hope and joyful anticipations to the close of life? Such lessons as these, are of great consequence in the school of Christ, and we cannot wonder that God should take such methods in teaching them.

Professors! the close of your profession will come, and the nature of that close should be a matter of solicitude to you. Whether your sun shall set in clouds or in brightness, ought not to be a subject of absolute indifference. True it is, that your chief concern should be, to maintain a consistent profession while you live; for this is the most likely way to make a happy one when you die; but still, when we consider how much it tends to edify the church, to hear of the lively faith and hope of its dying members; and how much it tends also to awaken and impress careless sinners, it ought to be a matter of desire and prayer, that we might finish our course with joy, and glorify God in death. A holy life, and a happy death, and both of them for the honour of Christ, the credit of religion, and the good of immortal souls, should be the object of every Christian's ambition. These two act upon each other; he who would be happy in death, should be holy in life; and did we keep the death-bed scene in view, it *would be* one motive, and that not a weak one, to a life of eminent godliness. Death is a scene in which we can be found but once. We can glorify God through all time, and through all eternity, by ten thousand acts, ten thousand times repeated, but we can honour him but *once*, in dying; how much we ought to be concerned then, to do that well, and realize the saying—

> "His God sustain'd him in his dying hour,
> His dying hour brought glory to his God."

For *this purpose*, we should, like the Apostle, die

daily. The whole of life should be one continued exercise and discipline for death. All days should be spent with reference to the last, and all objects looked at in connexion with the sepulchre. We should never forget "*to lay up a stock of prayers for a death-bed.*"

The prospect of death should not distress us. The fear that hath torment, the dread that brings us into bondage, should be subdued by a distinct exercise of faith, in reference to this awful event. Faith should have exercises, appropriate to every situation in which we can be found; we should have faith for life; faith for death; faith for eternity. Not only faith *in* a dying hour, when it is present, but faith *for* it, when it is yet future. All evils look greatest at a distance, not excepting death itself. There is scarcely one fact more borne out by the experience of the church, than that the fear of death diminishes in the heart of God's people, the nearer they approach the dark valley; for, in truth, the nearer they draw to that scene of gloom, the closer do they come to the heavenly glory, the light of which there breaks on the night of the tomb. Multitudes who, during their lives, could never think of dying, but with some painful solicitude, have been astonished to find how their fears all vanished, and with what peaceful hope they could lie down and expire.

Reasons may be assigned for this, which are quite sufficient to account for the encouraging fact. In those awful circumstances, *the attention*, hitherto divided between earth and heaven, *is more concentrated, yea, is exclusively fixed on the latter.* Like a pilgrim going to the Holy City, who has arrived at its very suburbs, and loses sight of, and interest in, the things that had attracted his notice on the road, and sees only the towers, and walls, and domes of the object of his long and weary journey, so the departing saint, now sees only the things that are heavenly, and is occupied in the contemplation of the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory. *His dependance upon God's mercy in Christ Jesus, is now more simple and more firm*, in the near prospect of standing in the immediate

presence of a Holy God. The last remains of pride, self-righteousness, and vain glory, die within him; his fancied excellences vanish; his sins appear in their true light; and he feels more deeply and more delightfully that Christ is all in all. With a grasp of faith, new in its power, though not in its kind, he lays hold on the cross, and finds that it can sustain him even when sinking in death. *His assurance is then more confident.* He finds the necessity of coming to a conclusion about his state. The question must be settled. He cannot now do with doubts and fears, but must have the point cleared up, whether he is a child of God, an heir of glory, or not; and it *is* cleared up. He knows and feels that he depends on Christ, and nothing else. He is peaceful in the billows of Jordan; unaffrighted amidst the shadows of the dark valley; dead in heart to the world, before he is dead in body; and hopeful in the prospect of eternity. All this is evidence to him of personal religion! He *is* a Christian. Blessed conclusion! And it blesses *him*. Assurance, which he has sought through life, comes in death. If it was not a sun to shine upon his path through the world, it is the lamp to cheer him along the dark avenue of the grave. He can die in peace, for he *now knows* in whom he has believed. But in addition to all this, *God is especially near his dying saints*, and loves then to grant them the strongest consolations of his Spirit. It seems to be his design and pleasure, to make grace most triumphant amidst the weakness and decays of nature, and to prove that the blessedness of an immortal soul arises from himself, since he makes it happy by his presence, when every thing else conspires to make it miserable. We can imagine that the object most interesting to the heart of infinite love, is the dying martyr, and next to him, the dying Christian. It is the last time till the resurrection morning, in which God permits the world to look upon his children; and then, when he is taking them away, he presents them with the smile of peace upon their countenance, and sometimes with the song of victory in their lips. He seems to make it a point to

meet them in the dark valley, and reserves his strongest cordials for their expiring moments. It is said of those that believe in Jesus, that they shall not *see death*. The grim monster is in the gloomy passage, but Christ interposing between him and the dying believer; the Christian looking only at the Saviour, passes by without noticing the terrors of the last enemy. God has promised not to forsake his people, even amidst the troubles of life, but he *compasseth them with his presence*, amidst the sorrows of death. How rarely do we hear of a consistent Christian dying in a disconsolate state. That some who have been lukewarm and irregular, who have not been watchful and diligent, are left to disquietude and perturbation in that season, when it is most desirable there should be peace, is very true. God chastises the inconsistencies of their lives, in the season of their death. Purgatory is a mere Popish delusion, but the disciplinary process of a long and cheerless approach to the tomb, is sometimes employed by Sovereign Mercy, to meeten the backslider in heart, for the realms of glory. Seldom, however, is the consistent professor left to darkness and distress in his last moments; on the contrary, he usually finds his dying chamber to be the vestibule of heaven, where the anthems of the Redeemed are heard within, inviting him to the work of everlasting praise.

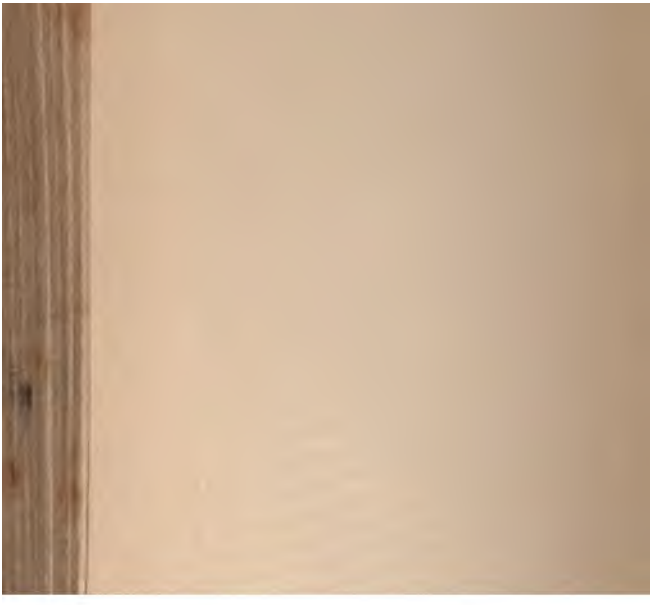
Let the consistent professor, therefore, go cheerfully forward to his latter end. Let him cast away the fearful apprehensions of a dying hour. Not that all kinds and degrees of fear can be *totally* suppressed. Death is an awful event: and to regard it with careless indifference is the mark of a hardened heart, and not of a renewed one. Some good people have distressed their minds, and written bitter things against themselves, because they could not *altogether* rise above the fear of death. But this is needless self-torment. There is an apprehensiveness of this great change, which is almost inseparable from humanity, and indeed is one of the safeguards of life, and which is greatly increased, in some cases, by physical temperament. This may co-exist with sincere, and even

with *eminent* piety. Mr. JAY, I remember, illustrates the subject thus:—A man may be in America, while his wife and family are in this country. He may wish to be with them, for his heart is there: but still he may dread to cross the Atlantic ocean which lies between himself and them. So a Christian's heart may be in heaven, yet he may dread to pass through death, though it leads to glory. Nothing tends more to subdue this natural fear of the last enemy, than the habitual contemplation of the heavenly state, and the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ, for the dying hour. As a dark object when seen between two resplendent ones, loses its gloomy aspect, and becomes itself almost bright; so death, when viewed between the cross of Christ, and the crown of glory, receives a lustre by reflection, which conceals, if it does not altogether remove, its horrors. Wherefore let us go on to meet the last enemy with the joint language of both Testaments upon our lips. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff comfort me." "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Who can lift up the veil and see the Christian in his eternal state? If in an earlier part of this volume, when considering the dangers of self-deception we exclaimed, with shuddering horror, "*A professor in hell!*" with what transporting delight may we exclaim, *A professor in heaven!* But who can follow him into the unapproachable light, the insufferable splendour of the divine presence? Mortality is swallowed up of life; humanity is absorbed in glory.

There is one thing, among many others, which deserves a momentary attention; it is the interview of sincere, consistent, and persevering professor, with "the Lord that bought him." Of that scene, however, little can be imagined but what is suggested, by the

words which his Lord will then say to him: "*Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* Thou hast taken up my name, and hast not dishonoured it; entered my church, and not defiled it; professed my religion, and not disparaged it; borne my cross, and not added to its ignominy, by inconsistency of conduct. Well done, well done." O rapturous expression! How joyful a sound does such a testimony carry from the mouth of Christ! O what can be so grateful and reviving to the heart of a good man, as to have the Lord of life and glory say to him, well done? What a reward for all the labours, and self-denial, and sufferings of a life of piety, to hear God say—"I am well pleased with thee!" But this is not all; for he will add—"*Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*" "Thou hast laboured well in thy profession; that is all over forever, and now enter upon thy rest and thy reward: thou hast denied thyself, but not me, and now I confess thee as my faithful follower before my Father and his holy angels; thou hast had fellowship with me in my sufferings, and nothing now remains for me and thee, but joy unspeakable and full of glory, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." This is the sum of all felicity. But who shall explain it? What does it mean? The joy of which Christ is the *object?* a felicity to be derived from being with him, and beholding his glory? Or the joy of which he is the *author;* which he creates around us and within us? Or the joy of which he is the *possessor?* as though he had said "enter into that joy that is now to be common both to me and thee, and of which thou shalt partake with me." It is *all* these united. Into this joy the faithful professor will be welcomed and introduced by Christ himself. It shall not so much enter into him, as he into it; he is not so much to possess it as to be possessed by it; it is the atmosphere which is to surround him, the light which is to shine all over him, the very space which is to absorb him. Into this he is to enter, but never to depart from it; "the last thing we hear of him is, that he is gone into joy."



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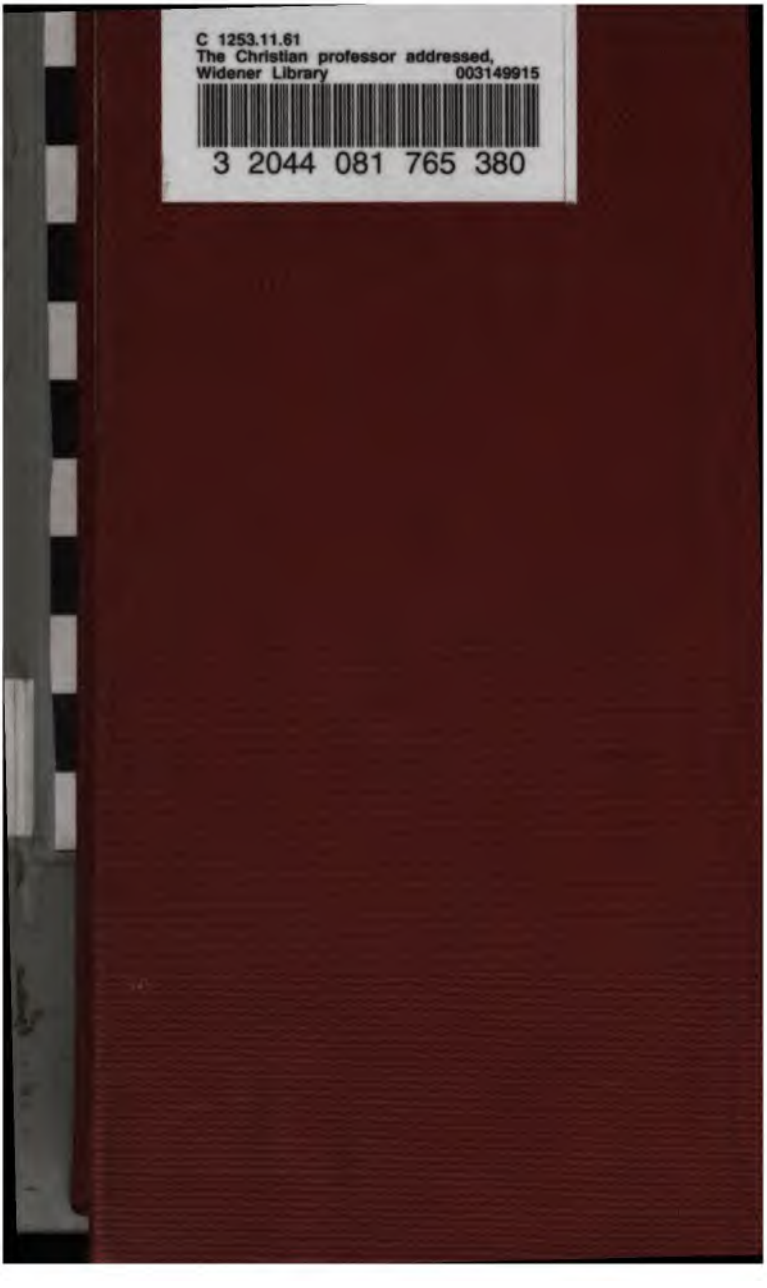
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